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Hand imagery as used by William Shakespeare in accordance with a conjectured formal acting style

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HAND IMAGERY AS USED BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE IN ACCORDANCE WITH A CONJECTURED FORMAL ACTING STYLE

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PREFACE

In pursuing the theory that William Shakespeare's hand imagery was often provided as a stage direction, it became evident that a background in three fields was an absolute necessity—Shakespeare (literature), theatre, and rhetoric. The complications involved in completing the research were also threefold—the scant supply of sources, the scope of the burden of proof, and the difficulty in balancing the three fields. Time and help are necessary for one exploring a theory as vague and apparently unsupported as this one. The patience and guidance provided as this thesis grew in fumbling fashion from pure theory to a formulated statement can be best appreciated by one who has had an idea and is left with the burden of proof; for it is one thing to conceive an idea and quite another to convince another of its validity and value.

Unsolicited and unrewarded help came from Miss Gloria Fisher, who spent an extraordinary amount of time listening, sharing her knowledge, and raiding libraries, including her own, in an attempt to help build a foundation in rhetoric. A special thank you must be extended to her associates in the Speech Department of Creighton University, who have always cooperated in strange, experimental projects, for the tacit permission to deplete their departmental library.

INTRODUCTION

Shakespeare wrote to be acted, not read.

English majors and casual readers are often warned not to criticize some of the glaring errors in Shakespeare's plays because they are not as obvious on the stage. Some never get closer to an understanding that these plays were written to be acted. They would be better advised to be constantly aware of the plays' proper place on the stage.

Shakespeare fascinates the literary-oriented and the theatre-oriented because his genius still has lessons for everyone. Cross-interests appeal to a variety of readers, but specific areas intrigue scholars—verse, characterization, invention, and theme among others. Even these obvious lines of study cross between theatre and literature. Instead of using the stage only as an excuse for scattered errors, students of literature should recognize the need to study both theatrical and literary aspects. We need knowledge in both areas if we are ever to catch up with Shakespeare.

After four hundred years, we are still trying to understand what Shakespeare was planning to do on those Elizabethan stages. Some information is lost because it has passed into obscurity, or worse, vanished, over the centuries. But in other cases, the information is contained within the plays

and we have simply overlooked it. Students in theatre and English literature can lend mutual aid in this search for understanding. By combining the subjective viewpoint of the actor and the objective viewpoint of the scholar, we can see the depth and perspective which the plays offer.

Both viewpoints have advantages and both are employed in this thesis. The objective literary viewpoint allows for an unobstructed search for a pattern. Hand imagery patterns are traced through comedies, tragedies and histories to determine if Shakespeare deliberately inserted hand imagery in order to direct the actors' gestures. The subjective theatrical viewpoint helps translate lines into actions. Both viewpoints must be used to analyze the way that Shakespeare's imagery embellished his source descriptions and his own creative dialogue with deliberately inserted stage directions.

Hand imagery, as used here, creates an emotion or an action by devising descriptions and figures of speech which at least suggest the human hand. Of course, there are obvious, trite expressions, i.e., "they are close at hand." But the interesting passages transcend a mere expression of the obvious. Main interest lies with hand imagery which might have been inspired by a concern for potential gestures and by the validity for connecting the gestures and images.

In nearly all of Shakespeare's plays, hand imagery heightens drama and enhances horror. Perhaps the passage

most easily recognized as a chilling hand concentration is that one in which the bewildered Lady Macbeth moans, "Here's the smell of sweet blood still. All the/ Perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand" (V.i.55-56).[1] Other passages may not be as evident, but they make an impact on the audience, nevertheless. The scene in which Julius Caesar's assassins bathe their hands in his blood is not as famous as Lady Macbeth's, but it can still be recognized as a contrived scene of horror in which hands are used for visual impact.

In other instances, the hand play is set bizarrely on top of the story line with the obvious intent of inflicting the audience with gore, pain, or wonder. Anyone who has come in contact with Titus Andronicus will recognize the method used in that early attempt at tragedy. The gory sight of Lavinia waving her poor, bleeding stumps or of Titus having a hand lopped off in an attempt to save his sons obviously heightens the horror of the audience.

Shakespeare changed or added to the sources in order to include the above hand passages. Comparisons of sources and hand passages will reveal the significant alterations Shakespeare made while writing his plays.

The blank pages in history which confound a student of Elizabethan acting necessitate the brief study of traditional

[1]William Shakespeare, Shakespeare: The Complete Works, ed. G. B. Harrison (New York, 1952),p. 1213. All subsequent references to this play are taken from this edition.

similarity between rhetorical and theatrical gestures. Specific hand focus or gesture was planned to arouse a set reaction in the audience. Most people have had an opportunity to view a melodrama or a silent movie in which certain gestures communicated direct emotions to the audience. Few members of the audience, for instance, could fail to recognize the pantomime of "Ah, woe is me!" when the heroine turns her head away from imminent danger and applies a fragile hand appealingly to her forehead. Those stock applications were not inventions of melodrama; they were exaggerated stage conventions. Actors have always used stock gestures. Until Constantin Stanislavski inspired a technical revolution in the twentieth century, all acting incorporated the type of gestures which now seem so old-fashioned to modern theatre audiences.

Elizabethan theatre probably had its stock gestures to go along with stock images. Since there are no definite records of Elizabethan acting, we must pursue the question of what some of these gestures might have been. Applicable hand gestures will illustrate the technique Shakespeare might have directed his actors to use when he devised hand imagery.

Establishing this basic premise of an acting style necessitates illustrating the link between rhetoric and theatre. Although there are no records to prove that premise, rhetorical gestures logically fit the Elizabethan theatre needs and can specifically illustrate the emotion called for.

Since there is no original source to quote or even consult, a sketch of the similar histories and styles of rhetoric and dramatic styles supports the premise that known rhetorical hand gestures would have been used by Shakespeare's actors to enact the passages containing hand imagery.

All the imagery passages noted hold dramatic devices which supply stage directions for a hand gesture or which involve a dramatic focus on the hand. In short, they accomplish stage effects. The power of that impact may be noted when recalling the image of Lady Macbeth's sleep-walking scene. This well-known scene focuses attention on the hand that cannot be washed clean or sweetened again. It obviously achieves dramatic effect by focusing on hand imagery which, in turn, calls for strong hand gestures from the actress. Although other scenes are not as memorable, they call for this same imagery-gesture relationship.

Not all the hand images found in Shakespeare's works demand the use of stock hand gestures. Sometimes, they lend themselves to word use and gesture that can subtly tear at the emotions of the reader or viewer. But strong word choice also gives the actors powerful images to play on. These passages allow for both stock gestures and more fluid movements.

Five major patterns serve as referent categories for the discussion of the types of hand imagery. By referring to these five major patterns, it is easier to illustrate the imagery in isolated passages and as structural units

on which much of the drama is built. The latter best illustrates the care with which Shakespeare applied his hand imagery.

These areas will be used to determine a distinguishable purpose for the inclusion of hand passages. First, typical hand gestures and the importance of conventional gestures for an Elizabethan audience which was attuned to rhetorical gestures will be explored. Patterns both from the text of Shakespeare's plays and from the general background of stock hand gestures will illustrate the gestures. Then, the actual patterns of hand imagery which structure this thesis will be introduced.

As a final attempt to determine what importance hand imagery held in Shakespeare's plays, some plays will be studied with a concentrated, nearly chronological approach to the inclusion of hand passages. At this stage, comparisons will be made with sources.

By carefully building each step, the patterns can be recognized. With the ideas briefly explained here arbitrarily set as those which are most important, the search will be conducted with as much minute attention to details as is deemed necessary.

CHAPTER I

GESTURES IN THEATRE AND RHETORIC

Elizabethan Acting—Formal or Informal?

Before discussing the connection between Shakespeare's hand imagery and stock hand gestures, a great deal must be said about the development of Elizabethan acting. The controversy raging around Elizabethan acting cannot be solved in this thesis, but it must be dealt with. An integral part of the imagery-gesture theory of necessity must come from the acting style which existed; and since a decision on Elizabethan acting styles is still an individual one, the basis for a decision in favor of a formalistic style will be presented.

Before the argument for formalistic acting is approached, some idea of the major concepts behind the formalistic vs. naturalistic battle of acting theories should be presented. Bernard Beckerman flatly dismissed the possibility of well-developed symbolic gesture in the sixteenth century, because discrepancies discounted the few available records. Although he acknowledged the symbolic gesture recorded in Abraham Fraunce's The Arcadian Rhetorike, Beckerman found no conventional rhetorical pattern to solidify an apparent shift from medieval rhetorical style to the sixteenth century classical style which was influenced by Ben Jonson

and Francis Bacon. He found symbolic gesture unorganized and largely ineffective for a conjectured acting style.[1]

But even though he dismissed conclusions on gestic patterns as being too highly conjectural, Beckerman did feel that there were at least signs of attitudes which influenced acting. If there were no discernible systematized methods of delivery in the sixteenth century, there were a "few expositions of delivery" which stressed "grace of expression and stirring of affections."[2]

Other theories abandon the historical approach and deal strictly with the possibilities which appear after comparison and contrast of textual passages and known techniques of acting. Samuel Bethell, who acknowledged the giants of the controversy as naturalistic Harley Granville-Barker and formalistic Alfred Harbage, at least nibbled at the argument from an acting viewpoint.[3]

Bethell based his argument on a quotation from the man usually held responsible for the existence of the controversy—Shakespeare himself. If it had not been for Hamlet's instructions to his actors, an incident of no importance to the plot development, the intricate arguments concerning Shakespeare's theories on acting would have no point of origin. But this one passage in Hamlet is enough to set

[1] Shakespeare at the Globe (New York, 1962), pp. 114-120.

[2] Ibid., p. 121.

[3] "Shakespeare's Actors," Review of English Studies N.S., I (July 1950), 199.

scholars on a speculative search for Shakespeare's actual ideas about acting and his real concern for technique.

> Suit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature. For anything so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is to hold as 'twere the mirror up to Nature— (III.ii.19-24)

This passage may seem to be an argument for a natural acting style, but that assumption is based on twentieth century concepts of natural acting as the only good acting. Bethell saw other indications in Shakespeare's plays which would make any attempt at natural acting impossible. For one thing, he felt that the necessity for both actor and audience to deal with several objects of attention demanded a multi-conscious response. He pointed out reminders of a dual world—the play and the real—in comments such as the one made in Love's Labour Lost, "Our wooing doth not end like an old play" (V.ii.884). A weaker point in this multi-consciousness search implied a simultaneous consciousness of past and present caused by having contemporary references in a play set in an earlier period. The most obvious split occurs in the speeches of direct addresssin which the actor must both acknowledge his part as a player and maintain his character. Bethell marked the multi-conscious passages as impossible to play with techniques of modern, natural acting.

Through a consideration of the acting problems caused by a combination of the multi-consciousness response, the

non-naturalistic clown bits, and the insertion of vaudeville skits, which was tempered by respect for Shakespeare's own theories as stated in Hamlet's speech, Bethell contrived his own theory. The verse must have been delivered in formal rhetoric in order to meet the problems mentioned above, but that formality must have been shaded to something more natural in the exchanges of dialogue and conversational prose.[4]

So, Bethell may be said to stand mid-way between the two schools of thought. He attempts to approach the problem from an actor's standpoint but deals with speech rather than gestures; and he fails to make a firm choice between the formal and informal schools of thought. His conclusion is an important example of the type of theorizing which complicates the very act of choosing a formalistic style of acting, based on rhetorical influences, as the proper style for which Shakespeare must have written.

Another decision for formalized acting which was based on purely practical considerations was that reached by M. C. Bradbrook. From the technicians' point of view, the lighting problem seemed to necessitate formalized action: "To maintain attention it would be necessary to exaggerate movement or statuesqueness, to use inflated delivery and conventional gesture."[5]

[4]Bethell, pp. 203-204.

[5]Themes and Conventions of Elizabethan Tragedy (Cambridge, 1952), p. 21.

A paradox exists between the problem created because of Hamlet's speech and the rarity of any other references to actors in Shakespeare's plays. A rare reference such as that made by Brutus in Julius Caesar may hold a hint of approval but it does not build the actor's image.

> Let not our looks put on our purposes,
> But bear it as our Roman actors do,
> With untired spirits and formal constancy. (II.i.225-227)

Still, Miss Bradbrook felt there were other ideas which could be obtained from the text and from an historical perspective. Knowing something of the problems of a repertory company, she felt that lack of time to prepare scripts automatically led to the development of stiffened, conventional acting. And a perusal of the dialogue almost automatically indicated pompous delivery as necessary for the long rhetorical passages, the witty exchanges of comedy and farce, the soliloquy, the aside, and the "bravura" speeches.

Miss Bradbrook felt that the general consensus placed Elizabethan acting in the position of formalized technique, with conventional movement a necessity to carry dramatic illusion. Her strongest plea for acceptance of formalism came then, not from arguments based on research, but rather from references to accumulated opinions.[6]

But appealing to a general consensus does not really answer the powerful argument of Harley Granville-Barker. It is always difficult to build a dispute against an

[6]Elizabethan Stage Conditions (Hamden, 1962), pp. 106-109.

acknowledged leader in a field. But in this case it is even more difficult, because Granville-Barker also resorts to opinion as a basis for a conclusion—his own.

In forming his opinion, Granville-Barker concentrated on the technical concerns which he felt must have affected the judgment of a man who had devoted his life to good theatre. To critics such as this, the emotional impact of the possibility of a great genius such as William Shakespere's not having the feeling for "good" acting stimulates their search for proof of naturalism or informal acting. The discussion becomes a fanatic search for proof of Shakespeare's good standing in acting annals instead of an objective search for truth.

In works such as his Prefaces to Shakespeare, Granville-Barker sometimes discussed acting methods, but he based the discussion on the possibility of the play allowing the use of informal acting methods. If the play lacked depth of character or if the plot was too absurd to merit study by the natural actor, the play was relegated to a category of Masque—a category reserved for plays which a formalistic technician would be able to place into a normal dramatic pattern.

It must be remembered that his primary purpose was to free Shakespeare from the bombastic traditions developed during the nineteenth century. Granville-Barker deliberately shocked critics and audiences with his productions in an effort to inject new life into plays that were being held back

by restrictive traditions. As M. St. Clare Byrne stated in her foreword to Prefaces, William Poel and Barker were looking for the authentic Shakespeare in the hodge-podge that had been left by a theatre which had "rearranged and rewritten his work, altering structure, balance and characterization to suit its own theatrical purposes and what it believed to be contemporary taste."[7]

In view of the actual problem Granville-Barker attacked, it is easy to understand why he was so concerned with character; he tried to give Shakespeare a chance to live again. Attempts by scholars to discover what kind of a theatre Shakespeare wrote in are outgrowths of this century--there was not much for Granville-Barker to turn to for research. And as a dramatist in search of essence, he had to concentrate on character as the means to find Shakespeare's original intentions. With an emotional leap, he concluded that Shakespeare had actually known and allowed to be practiced a fundamentally naturalistic presentation of character--a conclusion which justified the Poel-Barker innovations.[8]

As a result of these attempts at justification and new interpretation, the conclusion placed Shakespeare as a master of character, who created for self-expression through

[7]I (Princeton, 1963), p. xii.

[8]Ibid., pp. 4-11.

the actor, who used the "old rhetoric" that "robs these creatures of flesh and blood of their reality" only for "rhetorical purposes."[9]

Hamlet's speech turns into a pure plea for informal or natural acting in the hands of such emotionally involved critics. Key phrases such as "Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue" (III.ii.1-2), and "Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand" (III.ii.4-5) become automatic proofs of Shakespeare's dislike of formal rhetorical delivery and gesturing.

But that theory has two inherent fallacies. First, there is the assumption that only natural acting is good acting; and, second, the criticism of rhetorical delivery presumes its existence. That was the underlying complaint of Alfred Harbage, who was responsible for the most articulate defense of formalism until Bertram Joseph's appearance.

Harbage became incensed over Granville-Barker's polar divisions of formal repetition or imaginative interpretation. He could not see the justification for applying the tag "imaginative interpretation" to Hamlet's speech or the further speculation that the actor's art had undergone a revolution during the Elizabethan period.[10]

Rather than continue the battle of labeling without stopping to define terms, Harbage set down definitions and

[9]Granville-Barker, pp..28-29.

[10]"Elizabethan Acting," PMLA, LIV (September 1939), 686.

tried to analyze. To begin with, he said the two terms imaginative and interpretation could and should be applied to both formal and natural acting. The contrast between the natural and the formal actor is especially important if a discussion of the terms is to continue, and Harbage's definition should be regarded as basic to the meanings used in this thesis.

> Natural acting strives to create an illusion of reality by consistency on the part of the actor, who remains in character and tends to imitate the behavior of an actual human being placed in his imagined circumstances. He portrays where the formal actor symbolizes. He impersonates where the formal actor represents. He engages in real conversation where the formal actor recites. His acting is subjective and 'imaginative' where that of the formal actor is objective and traditional.[11]

The attempt to separate acting by emotional and unemotional interpretations does not, and should not, follow the naturalistic and formalistic divisions; naturalistic acting is better placed in realistic theatre where it belongs.

With the major problem of mistaking formal acting for bad acting taken care of, Harbage turned his attention to some of the circumstances which led to his conclusion on acting style. Persistence of the dumb-shows seemed to indicate the tendency to segregate pantomime and dialogue for the telling of a story. And the purely practical consideration of a large outdoor stage called for the use of the whole body to convey feelings to someone whose view

[11]Harbage, p. 687.

and hearing might be obstructed. Above all, Harbage wanted to assure people that formal acting was not necessarily bad; it also required skill and technique from the actors. And since the Elizabethan audience was in accord with this acting style, part of Shakespeare's accomplishment was in providing actors with the best scripts to please that audience.[12]

It is not necessary to go any further into the controversy over the two schools of acting to see how involved and how purely speculative it is. Still, books concerning Shakespeare's theatre voice the need to derive some system of gestures and acting styles which might have been used by Elizabethan actors. Most of these writers feel facts are necessary for an historical reconstruction. Those most interested in the technical points of acting call for information to provide adequate material for actors and directors who revive these plays so often. For this thesis, the structure of acting style is essential for an acceptance of formal delivery of hand imagery.

Tracing the history of acting and rhetoric leads to the conclusion that Elizabethans depended upon stylized, conventional gestures which were adapted or directly borrowed from rhetoric. Without attempting to determine what aesthetic impact resulted, it will be shown that a formal style is the logical method that Elizabethan actors would have employed.

[12]Harbage, pp. 703-705.

Theatre and Rhetoric—A Common History

The best way to illustrate this conclusion is to present a brief survey of facts and known parallels between rhetoric and acting. History indicates that a conventional, formalized acting style existed before and after the drama in the Elizabethan period. Where gaps exist in acting records, a pattern can be found in rhetoric. Specific hand gestures provide examples which build a valid foundation for the development of a theory concerning Shakespeare's use of hand imagery.

This method of tracing the development of acting will serve as a pattern of proof for the conclusion employed in this thesis. Even when allowing for a natural tendency to sift materials to prove a favored point, the process provides ample material for a realization that the acting style must have been formal.

It is unfortunate that no records of Elizabethan acting exist, but there is some indication that Elizabethans followed earlier theatrical traditions which were based on rhetoric. The knowledge we have of theatrical practices is limited to a few pictures and incidental written commentary. We have no accurate records of stages, playhouses, costumes, or actors. Although ages immediately preceding and succeeding the Elizabethans left pictures to indicate what the actors achieved in stage action, this giant period of drama's awakening left no record but its scripts and

"Bequeathed us a few vile woodcuts and one daub, from which we learn little or nothing of how English acting made its way from Cambyses to Tamburlaine and from Tamburlaine to Hamlet."[13]

What we do know about the theatre indicates that traditional theatrical devices had been adapted by Elizabethans and were in wide use. Influences of dumb show and allegorical characters were inserted in plays which also bore the violent stamp of Roman tragedies. For instance, in Titus Andronicus, during a momentary lapse in deaths and mutilations, Revenge, Rapine and Murder appear as a mixture of allegorical and tragic characters and indulge in declamatory speech. Scenes like this could very well have called for the staging of dumb-show tradition, that is, inflated, conventionalized movement. Through a combination exposure to allegories, dumb shows, and masques, Elizabethan audiences would have been attuned to formalized, rhythmic group representations of scenes—a pantomimic development which would have carried over into the acting tradition.[14]

Gestures used to act out these formalized scenes would have come from rhetorical records. Chroniclers such as John Bulwer left copious accounts of rhetorical theory, application and specific gestures. From these records,

[13]William Bridges-Allen, The Irresistible Theatre (Cleveland, 1957), p. 195.

[14]Bradbrook, Themes and Conventions, pp. 27-28.

we learn that rhetoric was not concerned with voice alone, but with all bodily expressions as well; consequently, the whole person had to be involved and well-trained in order to deliver rhetoric properly. The finished orator would be comparable to a trained actor. Both had to concentrate on word meaning and expression and use all vocal and physical techniques in order to heighten that meaning for the audience. Bertram Joseph went so far as to conclude: "It is in this sense that it is valid to say that in the Elizabethan theatre the poet's words were all that counted; they counted in the sense that they were what the player's action embodied."[15]

Elizabethan actors were well-trained to meet the heavy demands of repertory in a closely-controlled theatrical business. The actor's craft had to be developed, set, practiced and passed on to apprentices. Although English actors originally wandered into the profession during its early haphazard days of formation, by the time Shakespeare wrote, they belonged to companies and had a chance of eking out a living in the acting profession. Playwrights wrote special parts for actors who were stable enough and accomplished enough, and they were all trained well enough to meet the demands of producing new plays in the rapidly changing programing.

It may be true that Elizabethan acting developed a native tradition outside of the conventional rhetorical

[15]The Tragic Actor (Great Britain, 1959), p. 22.

pattern it adapted. Some changes had to be made to enlarge actors' roles from stock characters to the more complex characters who were developed after Marlowe's time. These actors, now being trained as boys and graduating into adult roles, had to be more flexible and more adaptable than any actors before them. Even though conventional gestures were used, they had to be thoughtfully adapted to the emotional demands of the part. This evolving concern with fitting an action to a particular emotion for a particular character carried acting to a transition between purely formal and purely informal acting which causes the confusion in trying to choose between the two styles.[16]

Couple this transition in acting styles with the break-neck pace of preparation necessary in any repertory theatre, and a clearer picture of the Elizabethan actors' problems begins to form. The playwrights were apparently as aware of the problem imposed by rapidly changing plays as were the actors. They had to work together, because both depended upon pleasing the audience to maintain their positions.

Actors influenced Shakespeare's plays both in the creation of certain characters and in the inclusion of certain stock emotions. Shakespeare had to write both for performance and for his actors. He demanded a great deal from his actors, but he also provided them with excellent scripts from which to work. With his background experience as actor and

[16]Beckerman, pp. 121-125.

theatre manager, Shakespeare had to be aware of the need to be concerned with the actors; and it is logical to surmise that he wrote with acting conventions as referents for his stage action.[17]

Gestic theories in oratory and acting were clearly associated in ancient Greece and Rome. Whether these gestures are regarded as stiff, awkward movements or as effective instruments of emotional communication, they were devised with a scientific intent of affecting a listener in direct relationship to the particular movement applied.

The Greeks were closer to the original purpose of acting—a natural urge to express the mimetic impulse. They were also closer to the early symbolistic basis of communication when spoken, and later, written language was only a symbolic representation of the idea to be communicated. The Greeks were far more refined than the primitives who left art symbols instead of language, but they had not abandoned the principle of symbolic communication. Drama was used as a didactic means of expressing high religious and moral values with as much pomp and majesty as possible, which, according to classical standards, called for heavily symbolic delivery.[18]

[17]Ronald Watkins, On Producing Shakespeare (London, 1960), pp. 110-111.

[18]John Dolman, Jr., The Art of Acting (New York, 1949), pp. 5-7.

Exaggeration is a common quality for all art. If life is to be represented through art, that artistic representation must be a little larger than life. In acting, the most extreme method of exaggeration is signaling or communicating through symbols.[19]

In addition to signaling, the ancient form of expression used in pantomime holds a continual place of importance in dramatic theory. Ceremonial dancing should be considered as much a part of pantomime as silent dramatic exaggerated movement. Both dancing and dramatic pantomime were employed by the Greek choruses and individual actors. To overcome the very practical problem of acoustics, the fullest communication had to be carried by the dialogues of the chorus and by pantomime.

> The large size of the masks, their exaggerated expressions, the symbolic contrasts of costume, and the various devices for making the actor seem taller were all helpful in making his pantomime effective over long distances, provided the simplification and exaggeration were broad enough.[20]

These dramatic techniques of pantomime and signaling have been carried through the development of drama. In England, they are more clearly recorded in miracle plays, but they can also be regarded as technical developments in the dumb shows and dances which were noted in Elizabethan plays.

The Romans developed Greek signaling to a finer technique, because they were more conscious of further refinements

[19]Dolman, pp. 35-37.

[20]Ibid., p. 239.

which acting and oratory could achieve. Elizabethans took most of their theories from the Latin translations which were available, so it is more important to consider the Roman theories than the Greek. Because Romans were more conscious of the need for fluid action and movement, they began to equalize the vocal and physical aspects of communication. They discussed both the significance of what the actor said and how smoothly and gracefully the actor moved. They also became concerned with the feelings communicated by actors.[21]

But the most important aspect of acting was still narrative description, which caused the focal point of concentration to rest on words. During Shakespeare's period of producing, this focus was still held by the influence of available Latin translations. Gesture and action grew out of the word, and Shakespeare's plays reveal the common concern with verbal dramatic creations which influenced the writing and acting technique.[22]

The natural result of this verbal attunement would be an attempt to communicate imagery and poetic beauty to the audience. This is probably the main reason for plot and other structural weaknesses in Elizabethan drama; tradition called for pictorial representation, vocal richness or physical action rather than a refined dramatic structure.

[21]Edwin Duerr, The Length and Depth of Acting (New York, 1962), p. 54.

[22]Watkins, p. 226.

The greatest oratorical handbook of the Romans is The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian, and Elizabethans looked to it for guidance in their own oratorical development. When looking at the Oratoria, it is easy to see how close acting and oratory had become for the Romans. The rules for orators could double as a handbook for actors. When discussing emotions, Quintilian said it was sometimes ridiculous to try "to counterfeit grief, anger and indignation, if we content ourselves with accommodating our words and looks and make no attempt to adapt our own feelings to the emotions expressed."[23]

Although speech and delivery were important to Quintilian, he regarded gesture as the most important polishing device. In fact, he regarded "natural" delivery as a sign of carelessness and possible ignorance.[24]

Hands were the most important means of achieving effective action. Whereas other body movements might help a speaker, handsccould actually speak themselves. The emotions for which hands were necessary were the same ones used by Elizabethans:

> . . . demand, promise, summon, dismiss, threaten, supplicate, express aversion or fear, question, deny, to express joy, sorrow, hesitation, confession, penitence, measure, quantity, number and time . . . have power to excite or prohibit, to express approval, wonder or shame, take place of adverbs and pronouns.[25]

[23]T. E. Page, ed., The Loeb Classical Library, trans. H. E. Butler, 4 vols. (Cambridge, 1958), II, 433.

[24]Quintilian, IV, 249.

[25]Ibid., p. 289.

Other than Latin rhetoric, only one possibility of a major influence on Elizabethan drama exists—the commedia dell' arte, which was the exclusive product of Italy. The importance of pantomime and stock gestures to these masters of improvisational creativity influenced continental Europe and, according to a few available records, Elizabethan England.

The commedia dell' arte broke away from the tradition of Seneca, Plautus and Terence—playwrights who also influenced English drama. Although the origins are uncertain, it was definitely connected to the ancient art of mime. It developed sometime before 1550 (about 30 years before Shakespeare produced), rose to its height in the seventeenth century, and dwindled away during the eighteenth century.[26]

Interest in the unique movement in Italian drama centered on the abilities of the actor rather than the quality of a script. A brief plot line was devised from which the actors worked on an improvisational basis. Not all events were spontaneous, however, because many appropriate speeches and actions were memorized and employed whenever applicable.[27]

Its influence on acting style formed a solid base for the tradition of the Comédie-Française, which later influenced English Restoration theatre. But the pure concern of the commedia dell' arte with the actor and the importance

[26]Ralph G. Allen and John Gassner, ed., Theatre and Drama in the Making (Boston, 1964), I, 219.

[27]Ibid., p. 219.

of pantomime had a directly resulting impact upon Elizabethan drama. And one of the precise elements was that "in the days when actors were taught a dozen things that they were not taught now, much attention was paid to the disposal of that intermittently useful but otherwise distracting agent of expression, the human hand . . . ."[28]

Some influence is granted by many critics, but Wilhelm Creizenach proclaimed that an actual revolution in acting technique and writing style followed the introduction of the commedia dell' arte to England. The writing influence showed most clearly in comedy style and jokes with Shakespeare's Taming of the Shrew serving as one of the best models. But this difference in style must have had a deeper revolutionary influence on acting after Kyd, Marlowe and Shakespeare began writing a different type of drama. This change may have accounted for the coaching which Shakespeare provided for his players.[29]

Acting had to change for the type of art developed by the commedia dell' arte, because the preponderant importance of declamatory language was no longer of any use to the players. The style had changed to incorporate gesture and movement as major comic devices, and the voice mattered very little. The shift from a written form to an acting creation

[28]Bridges-Allen, p. 198.

[29]The English Drama in the Age of Shakespeare (New York, 1964), p. 296.

meant that the technique which actors would rely upon was pantomime. It follows that a style of acting influenced by commedia dell'arte must, in consequence, be influenced by mime gesture tradition.

The Italians, then, led the English and French in breaking away from a preoccupation with words. "First, by their gestures, postures, movements, and 'stage business' the commedia players reminded audiences—and all workers in the theater—that the theater is a place for seeing actors as well as for listening to them."[30]

By breaking away from declamatory writing and bringing attention to expressive techniques, the actors were providing a means of actually working with the ideal physical devices which Quintilian had called for. Consciousness of the need to develop smooth, flowing movement and the use of acting to portray common events may have led to the still-formalized "natural" acting which confuses critics.

Shakespeare's awareness of pantomime is obvious in some major scenes which were written to accommodate the use of mimed performance. When Ophelia reports Hamlet's madness, she should use pantomime to exaggerate the actions she describes:

> He took me by the wrist and held my hand.
> Then goes he to the length of all his arm,
> And with his other hand thus o'er his brow,
> He falls to such perusal of my face
> As he would draw it. Long stayed he so. (II.i.87-91)

[30]Duerr, pp. 117-118.

Another scene in which the pantomime is clearer is in The Merchant of Venice. Shylock expresses his hatred of Antonio by describing explicitly what actions Antonio and Bassanio, who are on stage at the same time, should be pantomiming in the background: "How like a fawning publican he looks!/ I hate him for he is a Christian . . ." (I.iii.42-43).

These two major theatrical developments, rhetoric and pantomime, met and developed in Elizabethan England. But changes had altered them from their ancient applications in highly conventionalized acting and speaking. Both had been refined through practice and changed to meet the new balance between movement and speech.

Elizabethan Acting—Use of Rhetorical Gestures

If we are to gain any idea of what acting style the Elizabethan actors used, we must look to the records left by contemporary rhetoricians. With the knowledge that actors did develop some style which was consistently employed and conscientiously passed down, and the further awareness of the similarity between rhetorical and acting gestures, the copious accounts of rhetoric which survive can serve as the most accurate leads to the types of gestures which were employed.[31]

Joseph points out that the terms "lively," "natural," and "familiar" were used by Elizabethans as good qualities

[31]Joseph, Acting Shakespeare (New York, 1960), p. 83.

for both the orator and the actor. There is a clear link back to Quintilian in the demand for any emotional delivery to draw upon sincerity in the performer and a complete communication through voice, countenance and movement.[32]

> Action as a whole is to function as an external image of an internal mind. It is a shadow of affections [a reflection of emotions] which is communicated in voice, countenance, and gesture of the body; these are three springs which flow from one fountain, called vox, vultus, vita, voice, countenance, life.[33]

The greatest medium for oratorical training was one which also accounted for England's widespread oratorical knowledge and practice. Nearly every school included rhetoric as part of its required curriculum, so that school boys were trained to both understand and employ the rhetorical techniques as training for proper "breathing, inflection, emphasis, phrasing, gesture and stance . . . ."[34]

Not only were the boys forced into learning the art of rhetoric, they also had to transfer their knowledge to plays. When they acted out plays in their schools, they were supposed to learn to gesture and speak as much for their personal development as for the dramatic knowledge gained thereby. One reason that plays were emphasized was the underlying belief that a speaker's delivery depended

[32] Elizabethan Acting, pp. v-vi.

[33] Thomas Wright, The Passions of the Mind in General (1604), p. 176 as quoted in Elizabethan Acting, p. 9.

[34] Bridges-Adams, p. 200.

upon what he was genuinely feeling. These academic performances could develop the ability to feel emotion and to express it in action. Under the influence of Quintilian's rules, boys were instructed to identify themselves not only with characters in plays but even with the individual speakers in the Latin dialogue exercises.[35]

The emphasis was increased in higher forms so that in universities there were more plays. This background helped train them as knowledgeable audience members and would, therefore, guarantee audiences which were educated to the types of gestures used by the actors. Perhaps the greatest indication of the widespread concern with types of gestures is the collection which was printed by John Bulwer in Chirologia and Chironomia. Over 100 drawings were printed in these two volumes to provide precise pictures of how the action could be made to suit the words.[36]

There was a conflict between a natural, lively delivery which was required of good speakers and some of the declamatory speeches which were supposed to be delivered. Somehow, stage players had to accomplish a balance between speaking and acting out such cumbersome poetic passages as Romeo's "It was the lark, the herald of the morn" (III.v.6). But if the simplest lessons to a schoolboy could, as Thomas

[35]Joseph, Elizabethan Acting, p. 11.

[36]Bridges-Adams, p. 200.

Heywood noted, "instruct him to fit his phrases to the action, and his action to his phrases, and his pronunciation to them both,"[37] then actors would have had the same training. Basics of rhetoric would clearly have helped Elizabethans understand how to act out Shakespeare's uneven verse and would still benefit actors who struggle with the same problem.

Rhetorical awareness learned in school stayed with the boys who became actors and writers. A combination of rhetorical and classical ideas of dramatic form and structure influenced John Lyly, Thomas Kyd, and Christopher Marlowe and others who became playwrights. Some of the earliest English dramas came out of the universities; Ralph Roister Doister, by Nicholas Udall and Gammer Gurton's Needle were first given in schools as practice material.

Although Shakespeare's few years in school could not have included much rhetorical training, he might at least have been exposed to it. A more likely influence would have come through others whom he met in theatre and in social circles who were trained in rhetoric and classics and regarded both elements as necessary for good plays. Experiments in the use of Roman tragedy and comedy in the plays listed above, and the later experiment in blank verse tragedy in Gorboduc, would have been likely places for Shakespeare to look when he was trying to learn how to write plays.[38]

[37]An Apology for Actors (1612), p. 87 in Early Treatises on the Stage, Toby Cole and Helen Krich Chinory, ed. (London, 1953), p. 44.

[38]Brockett, pp. 115-116.

If a true pattern exists, it should extend beyond, as well as exist before, a given point; and the pattern in rhetoric and acting follows that rule. The same attitudes which existed in ancient oratory can be seen in both rhetoric and acting up to and including the twentieth century.

Francois Delsarte developed a close system of emotional expression and specific physical devices of communicating. Everything was divided so that certain emotions fitted certain parts of the body as in the case of gestures corresponding to the soul and heart and language to the thought and mind. Quintilian's concern with a coordinated concentration for the full expression of emotion can be detected in Delsarte's inclusive description:

> There are three great articular centres; the shoulder, elbow and wrist. Passional expression passes from the shoulder, where it is in the emotional state, to the elbow, where it is presented in the affectional state, then to the wrist and thumb, where it is presented in the susceptive and volitional state.[39]

Dion Boucicault's address, "The Art of Acting," might be used for an actor's concept of why some acting might be accepted as a state of grandeur—all actors must be bigger than life. Until modern naturalistic acting schools brought it to a lifelike representation, there was a long search for a suitable acting style. Boucicault's speech includes theories of eighteenth and nineteenth century acting which obviously show that the formal school of acting still ruled the boards.

[39] Delsarte System of Oratory: Containing All the Literary Remains of Francois Delsarte, Abby L. Alger, trans. (New York, 1893), p. 194.

> Now gesture on the stage must be distinct and deliberate. When you look at a person you do not turn your eye, but you turn your whole head. If you want to point, do that [with the arm straight out from the shoulder]—the action must go from the shoulder.[40]

He went on to emphasize that gestures must be large and that certain key gestures must be applied to stock expressions. He also echoed Delsarte's theory that a three-quarter position is stronger than a full front. His third important point is that knowledge must be learned from tradition—it does not come naturally.[41]

S. S. Hamill's 1891 publication, New Science of Elocution: The Elements of Vocal Expression, contains ideas which are similar to Delsarte's with an acknowledged classical tradition which goes back to Rome. When Hamill talks about action as nature's language of expression and the means of uttering the true revelations of heart and soul, he sounds like Delsarte; but he also reflects the original rules set down by Quintilian. He traces the importance of action back to Rome by mentioning the old rivalry between Cicero, who best expressed himself vocally, and Roscius, whose specialty was action. To emphasize the importance of action, he referred to Demosthenes, who "gave Action as the first, second and third qualifications for an orator."[42]

Perhaps the illustration which most clearly confirms the stability of hand gestures is the similarity of a twentieth

[40]Brander Matthews, ed., Papers on Acting (New York, 1958), p. 150.

[41]Ibid.

[42](New York), p. 283.

century hand chart and Quintilian's list of emotions for which hand gestures were necessary (see fn. 23). Although some of the terms are different, the list drawn up by Lester Hamersly deals with the basic emotions which have been of concern through the centuries:

> 1. SUPINE—Simple Affirmative; 2. PRONE—Emphatic Declaration; 3. APATHY OR PROSTRATION; 4. ENERGY, APPEAL; 5. VERTICAL—Negative or Denial; 6. VIOLENT REPULSION; 7. INDEXING AND CAUTIONING; 8. CLENCHED—Determination or Anger; 9. SUPPLICATION; 10. GENTLE ENTREATY; 11. CARELESSNESS; 12. ARGUMENTATION; 13. EARNEST ENTREATY; 14. RESIGNATION.[43]

Records left in rhetoric can help formulate a general, if not explicit, concept of Elizabethan acting gestures. At the base of their technique is the Quintilian handbook which stressed both emotional sincerity and stylized delivery. No clearer connection could be made than through the similarity of Heywood's comment on rhetorical training for schoolboys which instructed them to fit their phrases to the action (see fn. 35) and Hamlet's plea to the players to "suit the action to the word, the word to the action, . . ." (III.ii.19-20).

Mimetic tradition, another incorporation in Elizabethan dramatic theory, requires conventionalized, often rhythmic, movement to carry its meaning. Although pantomime does not necessarily match rhetorical gesture, there is an overlapping of theory, style and movement. Some of the most common gestures would be exactly the same. It is likely that the highly successful stock comic gestures were

[43] Everybody's Speaker (Chicago, 1909), p. 26.

adapted from the pantomimic influences of the commedia dell' arte.

Any illustrations from Bulwer's works will show the type of gestures which were employed. As can be seen from the plates from Chirologia, many of the gestures are perfectly obvious and are employed as readily in daily life as by an actor.

But as has been pointed out previously, actors as artists must be bigger than life, so their gestures, no matter how natural the intention, are noticeable. Prior to Shakespeare, there were references to the importance of hand gestures on the stage and, indeed, hints that they might be overused. In Chapman's A Humourous Day's Mirth, a complaint voiced against an actor who overgestures is apparently a reference to something from Greene's period:

> . . . like a king in an old fashioned play, having his wife, his council, his children and his fool about him, to whom he will sit and point very learnedly, as followeth,
>
> 'My council grave, and you, my noble peers,
> My tender wife, and you, my children dear,
> And thou, my fool.' (I.I)

Later, however, the same character enters with his arm in a sling, and when he is asked to recount something, he says: "Bear with my rudeness in telling it then, for alas, see,/ I can but act it with the left hand: this is my gesture now." (I.I)[44]

Joseph enlarged upon the aversion to the use of the left hand. For some reason, only the right hand was used

[44]Bradbrook, pp. 22-23.

unless both hands were employed for the gesture. Using the left hand was apparently an indication of dishonesty, possibly a connotation derived from the custom of branding thieves on the left thumb.[45]

Another interesting notation about the passage quoted is the applicability of Bulwer's Indico gesture (Fig. 4, F). The same criticism made to a modern actor would probably be rephrased to say that the actor pointed too often.

Some general descriptions of gestures used by the actors create a picture which is closer to a series of flash cards than a smooth moving picture—somehow, the method of stringing together the short, disconnected descriptions results in an unfavorable opinion of the acting style. The following is a good example of the type of inclusive list which is necessary for orientation to the gestic style, but the terse descriptions unfortunately render it a bit ludicrous:

> To demonstrate grief, he dropped his head, slumped his shoulders, and wiped his eyes; for joy, he stood erect, threw back his head, and laughed. He raised both hands to call Heaven to witness, and pointed downward with the right to show the way to Hell. He pointed to his heart to show he felt, and to his head to show he thought. He cringed in fear; knelt, both hands forward, in supplication; raised both arms, opened his mouth, and took a backward step in surprise; and folded his arms, dropped his head on one shoulder, and "stared fixedly" to indicate love.[46]

The total acting style being discussed here is of the nature of the above description. Emotions were relegated

[45] Elizabethan Acting, p. 63.

[46] John Wilson, Six Restoration Plays (Boston, 1959), pp. ix-x.

to stylized expressions and there would have been very few, if any, moments on stage during which the actor was not at least posed in a formal stance. But the focus must now be narrowed to hand gestures so that some idea of the explicitness of applied gesture may be recognized.

Hand gestures are seldom mentioned by writers who discuss general acting gestures; and when they are, they are usually listed as isolated examples for a major point. For instance, Joseph, who has collected the most material on Elizabethan gestures, researched possible connections between some of Bulwer's illustrations and some of Shakespeare's passages only to prove that acting was not necessarily stiff and awkward. He used gestic descriptions by Bulwer to argue his point in the following passage:

> These gestures are not formal unless we agree that to say to wring the hands in sorrow or distress, or to place the forefinger to the lips to indicate the need for silence is to "prescribe a formal delivery"; or that to stretch out a cupped hand when begging, or shake a clenched fist in rage, or to hold forth the hands as if to be handcuffed are all examples of a formal "use of gesture."[47]

But this thesis is concerned with the connection between Shakespeare's choice of imagery and his knowledge of hand gestures, not with the exorcism of the haunting spirit of formalism. Although Shakespeare might not have seen gestures in as universal a role as did Bulwer when he said: "Nature assigns each motion of the mind its proper gesture, countenance and tone, whereby it is significantly expressed,"[48]

[47] Elizabethan Acting, p. 17.

[48] Chiron., p. 23 as quoted in Elizabethan Acting, p. 57.

it is difficult to believe that he did not bear at least a notable proportion of that belief.

Arthur Gerstner-Hirzel conducted a thorough research on the possibility of Shakespeare's providing stage directions for players by writing them into the dialogue; and his book, The Economy of Action and Word in Shakespeare's Plays, is one of the most thorough on the subject. But he did not particularly concern himself with hand gestures. One of the few categories which would be applicable here is the one he designated as "Deictic" which discussed the use of hand gestures for connection with demonstrative pronouns. These would be very simple adaptations of the action to the word in cases such as Cassio's in Othello when, to demonstrate his sobriety, he says: "This is my Ancient, this is my right hand, and this is my left" (II.iii.117-119).[49]

In Acting Shakespeare, Joseph cites a description of an either/or gesture by Bulwer which would fit the same general purpose: "If both hands by turn behave themselves with equal art, they fitly move to set off any matter that goes by way of antithesis or opposition" (Chiron., p. 58, p. 104).

One specific action which might be directly attributed to a rhetorical gesture is the one in which Coriolanus takes his mother's hand and pledges a reversal of his plan to destroy their city. The possible gesture, called Chirothripsia, is described by Bulwer as pressing hard or wringing

[49]The Cooper Monographs on English and American Language and Literature, ed. H. Ludeke (Basel, 1957), p. 88.

another's hand as a token of duty and reverential love. Although there is no proof that this gesture was used, it might justify the major change in Coriolanus which followed such a simple act. And Joseph reported that Poussin painted Coriolanus in that action.[50]

Another simple and believable action, called Floccifaccit by Bulwer, called for snapping the fingers and moving the hand outward with a quick motion as a sign of throwing something aside, "an action convenient to slight and undervalue, and to express the vanity of things." (Chirol., p. 176) This could be applied to Malcolm's description of Cawdor's death in Macbeth:

> He died
> As one that had been studied in his death,
> To throw away the dearest thing he own'd
> As 'twere a careless trifle. (I.iv.8-11)

Grief was probably expressed by hand-wringing. Bulwer, who called the gesture Ploro (C, Fig. 2), described it thus: "To wring the hands in a natural expression of excessive grief, used by those who condole, bewail and lament" (Chiro., p. 28). Joseph speculated on its applicability to passages of emotional turmoil, such as the scene in Macbeth in which Lady Macduff cries "Why, then, alas,/ Do I put up that womanly defense, ..." (IV.ii.77-78)

Rejection could be indicated by another simple, easily understood hand gesture. Again, Bulwer provides the description: "Both hands objected with the palms adverse,

[50] Elizabethan Acting, pp. 60-61.

is a foreright adjunct of pronunciation, fit to help the utterance of words coming out in detestation, despite and exprobation" (Chiron., p. 54).[51]

The demand for attention might have been a common usage. The Audientam facit gesture (A, Fig. 5) might have been employed by the ghost in Hamlet to justify Horatio's later description: "It lifted up it head and did address/ Itself to motion, like as it would speak" (I.ii.216-217).

Now that the argument for assuming that Shakespeare was aware of, and influenced by, stylized hand gestures is complete, the major part of the discussion will center around the selection of key passages rather than the specific gestures which might have been employed in acting those passages. It is necessary to make a transition from a technical concern with acting style to a literary concern with poetic images. The realization that Shakespeare was writing plays for practical, immediate production qualifies his ability to incorporate stage directions into the imagery of his prose and poetic passages as a remarkable sign of craftsmanship.

[51]Elizabethan Acting, pp. 52-53.


A Supplico.
B Oro.
C Ploro.
D Admiror.
E Applaudo.
F Indignor.
G Explodo.
H Despero.
I Otio indulgeo
K Tristi tia animi signo
L Innocentiã ostendo.
M Lucri apprehensionẽ plaudo.
N Libertatem resigno.
O Protego.
P Triumpho.
Q Silentium postulo.
R Iuro.
S Asseuero
T Suffragor.
Y Respuo.
W Invito.
X Dimitto.
Y Minor.
Z Mendico.

FIG. 1


A. Muncro.
B. Auxilium fero.
C. Irascor.
D. Demonstro non-habere.
E. Castigo.
F. Pugno.
G. Confido.
H. Impedio.
I. Recommendo.
K. Officiosè duco.
L. Impatientiâ prodo.
M. Sollicitè cogito.
N. Pudet.
O. Adoro.
P. Conscienter affirmo.
Q. Pœnitentiâ ostendo.
R. Indignationem timeo.
S. Data fide promitto.
T. Reconcileo.
V. Suspicionē et odiū noto.
W. Honoro.
X. Reservatione saluto.
Y. Furacitatem noto.
Z. Benedico.

FIG. 2


A Inven tionc labo- ro.
B Fleo
C Appro bo.
D. Extolla.
E Collaterahter mor.
F. Indico.
G Terrorem incutio
H Silen tium inai co.
I. Redarguo.
K Compello.
L Veto.
M Diffidentiã noto.
N Mo ticm pro do.
O Conviciũ facio.
P Contemno.
Q Ironiam infligo.
R Contemptuosè provocare
S Avaritiam prodo.
T Offensiunculam resentio.
V Iram impotentẽ prodo.
W Stultitiæ notam infigo.
X Improbitatem objicio.
Y Parcè Da.
Z Numero.

FIG. 3


A Pacificat
B Auditores mitigabit.
C Nostoricis orditur.
D ad monstranda velat
E Modus agendi
F Admiratur.
G Hortatur.
H Rationes profert.
I Flocci facit
K Deprecatur
L Sic ostendebit seipsum.
M Negabit.
N Perspicuitatem illustrat.
O Exclamationem aptat.
P Antithesin exornat.
Q Argumenta digerit.
R Benevolentiam ostendit.
S Commiserationem denotat.
T Immensitatem aperit.
V Valdè aversatur.
W Execratione repellit.
X Addubitabit
Y Dolebit.
Z Benedictione dimittit.

FIG. 4


A Audientiam facit.
B Quibusdem orditur.
C Exordium accomodat.
D Instabit.
E Approbabit.
F Enthymemata tundit.
G Distinguet.
H Disputabit.
I Acrius Argumentatur.
K Demonstrat.
L Magnanimitatem ostendit.
M Indigitat.
N Attentionem poscit.
O Colligit.
P Urgebit.
Q Splendidiora explicat.
R Ironiam ostendit
S Leviter tangit
T Subtiliora explicat
V Exprobrabit
W Arguebit
X Memb: orati: distribuit
Y Amplitudinem denotat.
Z Contraria distinguet

FIG. 5

CHAPTER II

HAND IMAGERY PATTERNS

In one sense, an actor who attempts to dissect a script to find convenient gestures automatically disembodies all limbs in order to treat them as mechanisms by which gestures may be implemented. A good impression to carry through this discussion on imagery is that of an actor who must find a means of physical expression as well as vocal. One must adopt the perspective of an actor in order to follow the process of examining hand imagery as stage direction.

Hand images can be great aids to dramatic technique for any actor, whether he attempts to apply conventional gestures or follows more naturalistic physical movements. Elizabethan actors would have been concerned with stylized gestures which would convey clear meanings to their audiences.

Poor plays, like poor actors, offer few physical movements. They become declamatory rather than dramatic without the stage directions which are an integral part of the play. Modern playwrights, such as Arthur Miller and Eugene O'Neill, provide elaborate stage directions that often reveal the essence of their plays. But in the

Elizabethan scripts, most directions must be dug out of the dialogue.

Shakespeare's desire to include stage directions within the dialogue of his plays is not a far-fetched idea. However, it would be going a bit too far to conclude, as did Gerstner-Hirzel, that the playwright might have included stage directions with the intention of influencing future productions of his plays. We have no real indication that Shakespeare had visions of any actors performing in his plays other than the ones he could coach during his own lifetime. But a further conclusion is true and stands behind the reason for a continuing search for ways to act Shakespeare's plays: "The more the dramatist thinks or writes in actions, the better—the less he does so, the worse for those who are to stage his play in future times."[1]

G. Wilson Knight expresses himself through more glowing phrases, but he arrives at essentially the same realization of the need to provide gestures that telegraph meaning. "'Drama' means action; 'theatre' means seeing, we want more, in such a scene, than words and reasoning . . .. The poetry is to be expanded and embodied in physical and material forms: that is what staging is for, to embody the poetry."[2]

[1]The Economy of Action, p. 18.

[2]Shakespearean Production (London, 1964), p. 280.

Although Shakespeare was probably more concerned with staging than the type of listener Knight prepared his argument for, the same decision still must be imposed upon his plays. Why? Has the awe which has grown up around William Shakespeare's plays obscured the original purpose? Apparently, and the fault can probably be traced to the literary approach to a great dramatic work instead of an attempt to achieve a balance between theatrical and literary components. Not everyone approaches from the same duo-perspective angles which Knight attempts: "Shakespeare is crammed with visual impressions, a chain of them, blending one into another. From this flux of ideas and images emerge greater units: . . . The play is expressly dynamic, not static."[3]

This unusual balance between poetic and theatrical elements has never been achieved by any other playwright. Most others who have attempted verse plays have either become ludicrous in attempts to write verse or lugubrious in attempts to move the audience. Some have abandoned good dramatic form in favor of poetry, while others have created such free verse that it is barely discernible from prose. But no one else has been able to combine the poet's and playwright's genius to achieve the same level of production.

> Shakespeare's skill in making his players act consists in implying every action in his words. If the poet compares the pretty Cressida to a

[3]Knight, p. 30.

> sparrow and Beatrice's gait with that of a lapwing, he represents Falstaff's bulkiness (2 Henry IV I.ii.13) with the words, "I doe heere walke before thee, like a Sow, that hath o'erwhelme'd all her Litter, but one."[4]

Rather than attempt to examine the examples following as both poetic images and stage directions, it is better to step into the role of actor and attempt to picture the physical gesture which would apply to the selected passage. Then it is easy to see how imagery becomes a stage direction. This process applies both to speech delivery and to pantomime.

Shakespeare's stage directions can be found within the text, although there are only brief notations in the modern form of specific instructions outside of dialogue. If this method is not as handy as the modern text arrangement, it is no less effective once the material is ferreted out. After studying some of the gestures which Shakespeare was leading into, one can understand why some things were said and done. For example, knowing that a common gesture to express despair was for the actor to throw himself on the ground explains why Titus Andronicus receives the direction "Lieth down" and why he pleads for his son's life by directing his tears to the ground.

> For these, Tribunes, in the dust I write
> My heart's deep languor and my soul's sad tears.
> Let my tears stanch the earth's dry appetite;
> (III.i.12-14)

[4]Gerstner-Hirzel, p. 87.

With some concept of what gestures could be overused, the reader can understand the pantomime which Buckingham must use to illustrate the criticism of a ham actor:

> Tut, I can counterfeit the deep tragedian,
> Speak and look back, and pry on every side,
> . . . . . .
> Ghastly looks
> Are at my service, like enforced smiles,
> And both are ready in their offices
> At any time, to grace my stratagems. (R. III III.v.5-11)

And knowledge of stage conventions explains the strange description which Shakespeare provides for the meeting of the two kings in The Winter's Tale:

> There was casting-up of eyes, holding-up of hands, with countenace of such distraction that they were to be known by garment, not by favor. Our King, being ready to leap out of himself for joy . . .. (V.ii.50-54)

Four main levels of duo-consciousness will help gain the proper perspective necessary for the actual analysis. First, the material must be regarded on both physical and verbal levels. There is an interplay of understanding—understanding the words helps in finding the proper action, performing the action helps in understanding the words. But more important is the constant consciousness of formal delivery. Demosthenes was well aware of the importance of delivery when he said that action is the first, second and third qualification for an orator.

Second, and clearly related, is an awareness of the passages' dual role as gesture and imagery. Whenever a passage is examined, it must be regarded as a potential both on a physical level as a stage direction and on a

mental level as poetic imagery. Hand imagery often, though not always, fits the dual role of poetic image and internal stage direction. Shakespeare, the master craftsman, combined the two so cleverly and subtly that the poetic image remains undisturbed and the stage direction, too many times, undiscovered by the unaware.

As a third duo-conscious focus, the creator of life for the script must be regarded as both the writer and the actor. The writer created the whole drama and the lines of individual beauty, but he also left messages for the actor. The actor must create, or at least bring to life, the character in actual performance, so he must try to interpret and understand the script for that purpose.

And fourth, one must be conscious of the role of hand signaling for both actor and audience. In the case of the Elizabethans, who were attuned to rhetorical gestures, the actors must be imagined in their attempts to find the proper conventional gestures. The audiences cannot be overlooked at this critical point, because their exposure to and understanding of the gestures which were in vogue made easy communication possible. Their consciousness of the importance of hand gestures in acting increased the possible effects of any use of hands.

Hand imagery in Shakespeare's plays, when regarded as levels of dual signals, often stimulates the use of obvious physical gestures. But the obviousness is not the most

interesting aspect of the study. When attention is narrowed to hand imagery, that imagery often reveals itself as more than poetry. Sometimes it serves as a structural factor, sometimes it embellishes the source, sometimes it triggers communication with the audience or viewer. To aid discussion of the imagery, the passages are relegated to five major patterns--predictives, disembodiment, instruments, plucking, and expressions of the heart.

As focal dramatic devices, these patterns can be easily translated into stage directions by the actor looking for clues to proper interpretation and presentation. Some of Bulwer's illustrations have already been mentioned as good indications of plausible gestures used by Elizabethan actors: Indico (to point); either/or; Chirothpipsia (to pledge); Floccifaccit (to snap fingers); Ploro (to wring hands); rejection and Audientam Facit (to command attention). But there are others which will serve to provide a wider choice. They will be presented along with the patterns to show the stage effects which might have been achieved. After concentrating on the patterns, one is struck by the great importance and scope of hand imagery, not only for interpretation but for an understanding of structure and, most important, for stage directions.

Predictive agents, or hands as agents of fortune, were much more commonly accepted in Elizabethan times than they are now. Those who accepted a concept of a fate-ruled universe in which each object and individual had its own

category and its own fate to fulfill, would have believed in the inevitable outcome of predictions and the power of curses and omens. Sceptics probably would not even have adopted the modern audience responsibility of suspended disbelief, but they would have been more attuned to the complete faith which some people had in predictions of the future.

Hands could be interpretive images in dreams, agents of Fate, personifications of Fortune, or focal points of omens and curses. Any reference to future events accompanied by the proper hand gesture would have signaled the meaning to the audience.

In Julius Caesar, hand images appear as signs of the future. The night before Caesar goes to the Capitol, a storm rages so wildly that Casca thinks it must be an omen of disaster. Among other strange events which occurred during the storm, a slave

> Held up his left hand, which did flame and burn
> Like twenty torches joined, and yet his hand,
> Not sensible of fire, remained unscorched. (I.iii.16-18)

The use of the left hand could have simply indicated the slave's status, or it might have stimulated further abhorrence. At any rate, the actor could easily turn the pantomime of the slave's upraised hand to a flat upraised palm to signify the omen in the hand.

Another sign which preceded the tragedy was Calpurnia's dream in which Caesar's statue became a fountain of blood

"and many lusty Romans/ Came smiling and did bathe their hands in it." (II.ii.78-79) This image of bathing hands in blood recurred enough to achieve major importance during and after Caesar's death. So this dream served both to warn the audience of what was to come and to establish a major image. Again, the actor could effect a transition from the pantomime to the palm to heighten the hint of an omen.

Antony and Cleopatra employs the figure of the soothsayer. Although the idea is not excitingly original, Shakespeare does use it to build dramatic contrasts. First, he builds comic character sketches to introduce Cleopatra's two serving women. The only statement the soothsayer will make as he studies Charmian's hand is that she will outlive her mistress. A pathetic contrast is set between the glee aroused in the women when he tells them their futures are the same, and the courage with which they actually meet their future—death with their queen. A gesture used to imply a question or demand an answer was a hand turned upwards—a gesture which, when coupled with a question of fortune or fate, might have been reminiscent of a palm-reading pose.

In the above passage, the actors could keep attention focused on the hand by shading the gesture from demand to a palmreading pose. The same gesture might be used by Hamlet when he demands of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern:

"What have you, my good friends, deserved at the hands of Fortune, that she sends you to prison hither?" (II.ii.245-247) Again, the actor could use the gesture with slight variation to both demand an answer and represent an omen.

To King John, Hubert is the figure of Fate responsible for his decision to kill Prince Arthur. If anyone else had suggested it, the deed might not have been accomplished. But because of Hubert's complicity, John's hand and seal became a sign of damnation for both. Hubert was the living sign of the murder, not only because he carried it out, but because his presence turned the king's mind to murder in the first place.

> Hadst not thou been by,
> A fellow by the hand of nature marked,
> Quoted, and signed to do a deed of shame,
> This murder had not come into my mind. (IV.ii.220-223)

Here, the actor could open with Indico, shade to an upturned palm for "hand of nature marked" and then mold into a gesture indicating remorse (P, Fig. 2).

In Henry V, the prologues are used to summarize and link events, and in some cases to whet the appetites of audience for the possible developments of the forthcoming act. In this vein, the Prologue to Act II names the three Machiavellian characters who pose a threat to England because of their conspiracy with France. The chorus notes: "And by their hands this grace of kings must die,/ If Hell and treason hold their promises." (28-29) In this case, the actor might change from a gesture indicating the

harshness of the men (K, Fig. 1) to an upraised palm to focus on the omens of the "Hell and treason."

When the enviable state of Timon of Athens is introduced, the image created by the poet, "One do I personate of Lord Timon's frame,/ Whom Fortune with her ivory hands wafts to her" (I.i.69-70), ironically presents the problem of fawning followers who eventually destroy Timon. Fortune could first be represented by the upraised palm and the wafting motion could gracefully follow.

An omen manufactured to reflect history is uttered by Gardiner when the Queen is near death. He declares that nothing will be right in the kingdom "Till Cranmer, Cromwell, her two hands [supporters], and she/ Sleep in their graves." (H. VIII V.1.31-32) Here the gestures could indicate Cranmer with one hand, Cromwell with the other and while both hands are out they become "her two hands." Holding this gesture would lend strength to the omen signal.

Action in Henry IV, Part I is often advanced by the use of prophecy or strong declarations of intent. Hotspur, whose forces for battle were inadequate because Glendower chose not to march rather than cross the unpropitious stars, finds strength as he lies dying for one last flowery speech on the sadness of his death:

> Oh, I could prophesy,
> But that the earthy and cold hand of death
> Lies on my tongue. (V.iv.83-85)

A signal for prophesy could fold into a suitable gesture

for a brave soldier's death, perhaps an unfriendly farewell (D, Fig. 4) or a negation of his own life (M, Fig. 4).

A powerful curse is delivered by Joan La Pucelle in Henry VI, Part I—a history play which includes an unusual emphasis on witchcraft. "And may ye both be suddenly surprised/ By bloody hands in sleeping on your beds!" (V.iii.40-41) This follows a long scene in which La Pucelle has failed in attempts to conjure spirits that could save her and all France from falling to the English. The two against whom this last curse is uttered, Charles the Dauphin and York, did not die as she prophesied either, although York, after surviving the prophecy-ruled Part II, did die a bloody death in Henry VI, Part III.

Fortune is often personified in speeches such as Antony's suicide scene in Antony and Cleopatra. "Fortune and Antony part here, even here/ Do we shake hands. All come to this?" (IV.xii.19-20) Fortune, in this case, as dead to Antony as Antony will soon be, might be addressed with one brief gesture before Antony shakes hands, perhaps in a double handshake which could double as despair and resignation (N, Fig. 1).

Fate is kinder to Falstaff in The Merry Wives of Windsor. In fact, he credits Fate with the action that saved him from discovery: ". . . but Fate, ordaining he should be a cuckold, held his hand." (III.v.105-106) An upraised gesture to indicate Fate could change to a comic

show of hindrance (H, Fig. 2) to signal how Fate stepped in to help Falstaff and cuckold Ford.

Another of the themes, one of the most interesting and complex, might be described as disembodiment. The hand becomes a sign of unnaturalness; the character contrasts a normal hand action or cliche with an unnatural event.

At times, it achieves an even more abstract sense of dislocation from the essence—an almost existential concept that essence might be something beyond or separate from what an individual regards as whole or real. The hand in this sense either appears to be removed from the body or becomes an independent initiator of an action over which the mind has no control.

Whereas the predictive theme links to a tradition, the disembodiment theme is indicative of a disintegration or confusion of both reality and imagination. Through the decaying process, the hand becomes a symbol of unnaturalness. This decay can be internal—apparent only to the character involved; or it can be external—a process obvious to observers. The first phase usually indicates a manifestation of guilt within the character, who becomes increasingly aware of separation from normality as a result of the performance of an ill deed. The second phase sometimes follows the internal process and represents a stage which finally becomes apparent to others, or it indicates the character's dislocation from reality.

An example of this use of hands to separate from normality occurs in Hamlet. Hamlet hears of the unnatural actions of his mother and uncle from his father, the Ghost, with descriptions of the horrible, twisted relationships which resulted in his murder. His own wife had fallen from the height set by his standard of love "of that dignity/ that it went hand in hand even with the vow" down "Upon a wretch whose natural gifts were poor/ To those of mine!" (I.v.48-52).

The crushing indignity and horror resulted when the ghost realized it was his own brother's hand that killed him and took his wife and throne: "Thus was I, sleeping, by a brother's hand/ Of life, of crown, of Queen, at once dispatched" (I.v.74-75). The power of the actor's imagination and gesture accomplishes the sense of an unnatural hand accomplishing an act. This unnaturalness, identified in terms of hands, later drove Hamlet to the tragic revenge of his father's death.

In its least realistic state, that which was earlier designated as near-existentialism, the effect, rather than the cause, is noticeably different. The sense of isolation and disfigurement may be as intense as another scene in Hamlet when the King cries: "What if this cursed hand/ Were thicker than itself with brother's blood" (III.iii.43-44).

A break from the sense of guilt can be seen in Twelfth Night when Maria and Sir Andrew Aguecheck carry on a witty play on hands which Maria turns to an invitation

which slips by the ignorant Andrew: ". . . bring your hand to the buttery bar and let it drink" (I.iii.74).

The more typical expression of regret is used by Julia in Two Gentlemen of Verona. Although the scene is not a serious one, Julia's chiding speech directed at her own hand is still based on guilt for having torn up a letter containing precious words from one she loves:

> O hateful hands, to tear such loving words!
> Injurious wasps, to feed on such sweet honey,
> And kill the bees that yield it with your stings!
> (I.ii.105-107)

Henry V hired hands to perform acts of guilt expiation. As he pleaded for strength for his soldiers from the god of battles, he reminded the diety of all the attempts he had made to compensate for the act of usurping the throne of Richard II—an act which made it possible for his father and himself to rule. In addition to sanctifying Richard's body and building two chapels where priests pray for Richard's soul, he named:

> Five hundred poor I have in yearly pay,
> Who twice a day their withered hands hold up
> Toward Heaven, to pardon blood, . . . (IV.i.315-317)

The withered hands serve to emphasize the unnaturalness of both the original act and the attempts at retribution. The praying gesture (B, Fig. 1), which the actor could employ in this place, could be made more effective by emphasizing the withered and trembling hands which had been hired to do his praying.

A sense of unnaturalness encompasses the play on identity in All's Well That Ends Well. Diana, attempting to

convince everyone that Bertram is her husband, declares:

> If you shall marry,
> You give away this hand, and that is mine;
> You give away Heaven's vows, and those are mine;
> You give away myself, which is known mine;
> For I by vow am so embodied yours
> That she which marries you must marry me,
> Either both or none. (V.iii.169-175)

Unreality clouds Enobarbus' description of his first sight of Cleopatra floating down the Nile with her gentlewomen, who appeared to be mermaids:

> At the helm
> A seeming mermaid steers. The silken tackle
> Swell with the touches of those flower soft hands
> (II.ii.213-215)

The normally caustic, realistic Enobarbus could emphasize the magic more by employing an uncharacteristic gesture—the gentle touch (S, Fig. 5).

Adriana sets off the Comedy of Errors by warning the wrong Antipholus of the reaction he, as her husband, would have if she were to practice the unfaithfulness he does. In her accusation, she describes the rage which would attempt to destroy disembodied symbols of guilt:

> Wouldst thou not spit at me and spurn at me,
> And hurl the name of husband in my face,
> And tear the stained skin off my harlot brow,
> And from my false hand cut the wedding ring
> And break it with a deep-divorcing vow? (II.ii.136-140)

In Cymbeline, Cloten also places guilt upon his hand when he says farewell after being notified of his banishment:

> LUC. Your hand my lord.
> CLO. Receive it friendly, but from this time forth
> I wear it as your enemy. (III.v.12-14)

His final gesture might well be an unfriendly farewell (D, Fig. 4).

Guilt also causes a sense of disembodiment in one of the murderers of Clarence in Richard III. He wishes for the power to cleanse his hands of the horrible murder, and could probably use a wringing gesture (L, Fig. 1) while delivering the speech:

> A bloody deed, and desperately dispatched!
> How fain like Pilate, would I wash my hands
> Of this most grievous guilty murder done!
> (I.iv.278-280)

A final sense of disembodiment is that of hands as an extension of another person, or, in the case of the citizens in Coriolanus, of other people. "The noble Tribunes are the people's mouths,/ And we their hands." (III.i.271-272) In the individual sense, Sir Thomas Lovell refers to the Archbishop's untouchable relationship to King Henry VIII:

> The Archbishop
> Is the King's hand and tongue, and who dare speak
> One syllable against him? (V.i.37-39)

A third theme, hands as instruments, may seem to be only an extension of the above, but in actual use it does not always preclude dislocation. In this sense, the hands become actual weapons to carry out the wishes of passion or evil. For example, in King Lear, when Goneril looks for the power to become the warrior she believes her husband is too weak to be, her hands become her first concept of power.

Hands which become instruments are willed into action; and, unlike the disembodied agents discussed above, hands intentionally become useful agents. In most cases, they become actual weapons which an individual uses, or wants to use, to destroy. When the hands are used as destructive instruments, the most important element is the intent of the individual. Even the comedy As You Like It contains an example of the hate-filled intent which turns hands into instruments. The play has barely begun when Orlando attacks his brother, Oliver, for calling him a villain. "Wert thou not my brother, I would not take this hand from thy throat till this other had pulled out thy tongue for saying so." (I.i.62-64) This speech also serves as a stage direction for Orlando, who should continue throttling Oliver.

In the dark history of Richard III, the hand becomes a fiercer instrument which actually carries through the act of murder and is ready to perform it again. With a strange mixture of love and hate, Gloucester declares to Lady Anne his willingness to die at her command:

> Speak it again and, even with the word,
> That hand which for thy love did kill thy love
> Shall for thy love kill a far truer love.
> To both their deaths shalt thou be accessory.
> (I.ii.189-192)

There are variations on the theme of instruments, of course. In Othello, Iago uses the hands of Desdemona and Cassio, not as weapons, but as instruments by which

he begins weaving the web that will entangle every major character in the play. This example occurs as intrigue builds on Cyprus. The relationships in the tragedy to come are illustrated through the use of hands in Act II, scene 1, when everyone has gathered to await Othello's arrival.

Cassio's greeting to Desdemona carries an ironic tinge in retrospect, and a stage direction for gesture—Imensitatem aperit (T, Fig. 4).

> Hail to thee, lady! And the grace of Heaven,
> Before, behind thee, and on every hand,
> Enwheel thee round! (85-87)

Iago watches and schemes; his words provide stage directions for the pantomime of Cassio and Desdemona:

> He takes her by the palm. Aye, well said, whisper. With as little a web as this will I ensnare as great a fly as Cassio. . . . If such tricks as these strip you of your Lieutenantry, it had been better you had not kissed your three fingers so oft, which now again you are most apt to play the sir in. (168-175)

He immediately enlists Roderigo into his plot against Desdemona by recalling and interpreting the scene:

> Didst thou not see her paddle with the palm of his hand?
> . . . . . .
> Lechery, by this hand, an index and obscure prologue to the history of lust and foul thoughts. They met so near with their lips that their breaths embraced together. (258-265)

Thus, the plotting is established and Iago's true nature is revealed through a play on hands. He also uses hands to plan the image of the fatal handkerchief in Othello's mind: "Have you not sometimes seen a handkerchief/ Spotted with strawberries in your wife's hand?" (III.iii.434-435) And later, Othello focuses on Cassio

in the same way: "With that recognizance and pledge of love/ Which I first gave her, I saw it in his hand." (V.ii.214-215) Continual reference to the hands keeps them in primary focus for the audience.

One gesture which might be loosely connected to this pattern is the use of the hand as an instrument to swear by. In this sense, the hand might be used as an object by which to take an oath, as when Henry V declares: "Now, by this hand, I swear I scorn the term." (II.i.32)

Gerstner-Hirzel was interested in the link between the common stage practice of swearing upon the fingers or hand and the religious gestures of invocation. "The hand—as a symbol and instrument of acting—thus rises to a sacrosanct sphere. (Which it always had in religion; . . .)."[5]

During a scene from The Tempest, which only borders on reality anyway, Stephano tries to establish authority over the monster, Caliban, but is stopped by the constant interruptions of Trinculo. In a moment of rage, he finally swears that if one more interruptinn occurs, "By this hand, I'll turn my mercy out o'doors and make a stockfish of thee" (III.ii.76-78).

Another extension of the instrument theme would involve a strong intent on the part of the speaker, but the will to destroy would be absent. The stock gesture used

[5]The Economy of Action, p. 94.

for a pledge or other confirmation of intent was a slap of the palms. An instrument of pledge is plainly indicated in Henry V when Henry urges Kate to complete the pledge for their marriage: "Give me your answer, i' faith do. And so clap hands and a bargain." (V.ii.133-134)

The king offers a typical pledge in All's Well That Ends Well by the hand which Helena made well:

> And with this healthful hand, whose banished sense
> Thou hast repealed, a second time receive
> The confirmation of my promised gift. (II.iii.54-56)

The oath gesture could likewise be typical (R, Fig. 1).

But a fiercer pledge calls on a hand to become an instrument of revenge and would, in addition to the obvious pantomime, employ a gesture of hate (T, Fig. 3). Richard desires to bring Clifford to life so that he may fully revenge the deaths which Clifford caused:

> If this right hand would buy two hours' life,
> That in all despite might rail at him,
> This hand should chop it off, and with the issuing blood
> Stifle the villain, whose unstanched thirst
> York and young Rutland could not satisfy.
> (3 H. VI II.vi.80-84)

Love's Labour's Lost is based entirely upon an oath which was hopeless from the beginning. Nevertheless, the king and three of his attendant lords open the play with an oath to maintain honor against their own inclinations:

> Your oaths are passed, and now subscribe your names,
> That his own hand may strike his honor down
> That violates the smallest branch herein. (I.i.19-21)

An extreme of the pledge—the act of supplication which interested Gerstner-Hirzel—is extended by Isabel

when Mariana asks her to extend her hands as instruments of mercy: "Sweet Isabel, do yet but kneel by me,/ Hold up your hands, say nothing, I'll speak all." (Meas. for Meas.V.i. 442-443)

In Much Ado About Nothing, Leonato pledges his hands as weapons if the rumours which have been spread against his daughter, Hero, be true. "If they speak but truth of her,/ These hands shall tear her." (IV.i.192-193) The Duke of Venice expresses the opposite wish when searching for the true reason for the marriage of Desdemona and Othello: "Men do their broken weapons rather use/ Than their bare hands." (I.iii.174-175) But, in the end, Othello does use his bare hands to slay Desdemona.

A great contrast exists in Romeo and Juliet where hands are instruments of love. Romeo uses a love play on hands to win the first innocent kiss:

> ROM. If I profane with my unworthiest hand
> This holy shrine, the gentle fine is this,
> My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand
> To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.
> JUL. Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much,
> . . . . . .
> For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch,
> And palm to palm is holy palmers' kiss.
> ROM. Have not saints lips, and holy palmers too?
> JUL. Aye, pilgrim, lips that they must use in prayer.
> ROM. Oh, then, dear saint, let lips do what hands do.
> (I.v.95-105)

In later maturity, Juliet pledges her hands as instruments of death to uphold her honor rather than marry Paris:

> And ere this hand, by thee to Romeo sealed,
> Shall be the label to another deed,
> Or my true heart with treacherous revolt
> Turn to another, this shall slay them both. (IV.i.56-59)

As an unusual, extreme gesture of duty, the tamed Katherina pledges her hands to whatever pleasure Petruchio should wish of her; and, furthermore, she advises all women to take the same pledge:

> And place your hands below your husband's foot;
> In token of which duty, if he please,
> My hand is ready, may it do him ease.
> (Shrew. V.ii.177-179)

Plucking, the fourth dominant theme, usually conveys a sense of tearing fingers or hands rather than the modern connotation of a quick, deft movement. This image, which could be a study in itself, occurs often and seems to be placed to give the actor a strong stage action. The Oxford English Dictionary describes the early seventeenth century use of the word as follows:

> To pull, draw, or snatch something intangible, or from or into a state or condition; to bring (disaster . . .) upon a person; to snatch, rescue from danger ... ..

As an example of how the word was used, the dictionary suggests a line from Coriolanus: "When youth with comeliness plucked all gaze his way." (I.iii.7-8) Another phase of usage is illustrated in Measure for Measure, when the Duke laments the mockery accorded to laws: "And liberty plucks justice by the nose." (I.iii.29) The passage personifies the values being discussed and gives the actor a strong opportunity for gesture.

The plucking image is strongly applied in Julius Caesar when Cinna the poet wanders into the mob of enraged

citizens. Even when they know he is not a conspirator, they want to tear him apart. Realizing they are simply attacking the name, one citizen suggests that they "pluck/ but his name out of his heart, and turn him going" (III.iii.37-38).

In the sequel play, Antony and Cleopatra, the plucking theme recurs. One common use appears during Antony's appeal to the hand of death to pluck Fulvia back—an image which often occurs in death scenes. Later in the same play, in one of the many single-expression scenes, Antony prepares to meet his own death. Suffering from the news of Cleopatra's death, he cries:

> Off, pluck off.
> The sevenfold shield of Ajax cannot keep
> The battery from my heart. (IV.xiv.37-39)

Othello applies the act of plucking to his murder of Desdemona. Still unable to fully realize that life is gone, he moans:

> When I have plucked the rose,
> I cannot give it vital growth again,
> It needs must wither. I'll smell it on the tree.
> (V.ii.13-15)

An interesting use of plucking the rose is set up when sides are being chosen for the War of Roses:

> PLAN. If he suppose that I have pleaded truth,
> From off this brier pluck a white rose with me.
> SOM. Let him that is no coward nor no flatterer,
> But dare maintain the party of the truth,
> Pluck a red rose from off this thorn with me.
> . . . . . .
> VER. Then for the truth and plainness of the case,
> I pluck this pale and maiden blossom here,
> Giving my verdict on the white rose side.

SOM. Prick not your finger as you pluck it off,
Lest bleeding you do paint the white rose red
And fall on my side so, against your will.
(1 H. VI II.iv.29-51)

An excellent example of the contrast between the strength of the word and the quick, deft movement now associated with it, comes in the scene in which Hamlet and Laertes fight in Ophelia's grave. In a situation which would now call for a plea to "Pull them apart," the king commands: "Pluck them asunder" (V.i.287). A sense of the same strength in a situation which would provide an excellent opportunity for an acting gesture occurs in Two Gentlemen of Verona. Launce vows to protect the secret of love to the point where "a team of horses shall not pluck that from me, nor who 'tis I love." (III.i.265-266) Bardolph calls for superhuman strength when he analyzes their revolution as a great work "which is almost to pluck a kingdom down/ And set another up" (2 H IV I.iii.49-51).

The threat to pluck out eyes is a common one, and if the actor accompanies the phrase with a suitable amount of hatred and a ripping motion, the threat would be a chilling one. Isabella, standing helpless at the news of her brother's beheading, can only deliver the hate-filled threat: "Oh, I will to him and pluck out his eyes!" (Meas. IV.iii.124) And in another comedy, The Comedy of Errors, Antipholus of Ephesus rages at his wife for locking him out and at his servant for stealing his

gold. "But with these nails I'll pluck out these false eyes/ That would behold in me this shameful sport." (IV.iv.107-108)

In a play of twisted humanity, Timon of Athens, the plucking theme becomes sadistic. Timon curses Athens, the city which had turned its back on him, with wishes for the further decadence of its citizens. One passage provides an excellent opportunity for gesture:

> Son of sixteen,
> Pluck the lined crutch from thy old limping sire,
> With it beat out his brains! (IV.i.13-15)

The last imagery pattern explores hands that carry out a wish of the heart. This theme occurs most frequently in the dramatic, climactic scenes. The word-play stands next to "pluck" as an obvious lead into stock gestures which can provide an audience with an immediate clue to the emotions involved. The wish here is a literal one rather than the latent inner intent implied when hands are used as instruments.

There are two main applications of the hand as an image of the heart's wish. One method tragically conveys a death wish, as in Antony's suicide in Antony and Cleopatra. Another meaningful conveyance, love, stands out in both Othello and Winter's Tale when jealous principals twist innocent displays of gallant hand-play into cause for tragedy.

Two conventional gestures fit the hand-heart pattern. One, crossing one or both hands over the breast, is usually

an obvious stage direction written into the dialogue of one actor to designate the movement of another. Thus, Constance lists actions by Salisbury which denote the heaviness of the news he bears: "Why dost thou look so sadly on my son?/ What means that hand upon that breast of thine?" (K.J. III.i.20-21) In a less serious vein, the pains of love are located by Berowne, again in a manner which provides a gesture for other actors:

> Where lies thy grief, oh tell me, good Dumain?
> And, gentle Longaville, where lies thy pain?
> And where my liege's? All about the breast.
> (L.L.L. IV.iii.171-173)

The second gesture, laying an open hand over the heart, designates an intent to swear by the heart or the spot from which an emotion emanates. As in the case of the hand on the breast, this gesture is often written into the dialogue; but it is more likely a direction to the character speaking than an indication of what another actor is doing. When Iago has worked Othello into an agony of jealousy over the loss of Desdemona's handkerchief, Othello, ready for revenge, vows to kill his wife. The gesture is obvious when he states: "No, my heart is turned to stone, I strike it and it hurts my hand." (IV.i.193-194) A case in which the speech leads to pantomiming another character's actions is found in Henry VIII:

> . . . and with one hand on his dagger,
> Another spread on's breast mounting his eyes,
> He did discharge a horrible oath . . .. (I.ii.204-206)

Some expressions involving the hand and the heart do not make so obvious a connection, but they would make the gesture plausible. When Imogen pleads with Pisanio to carry out her husband's order to murder her, she disclaims her ability to kill herself:

> Against self-slaughter
> There is a prohibition so divine
> That cravens my weak hand. Come, here's my
> heart — (Cym. III.iv.78-80)

Othello, while quizzing his wife, can confuse her further by gesturing in time to his own riddle. "A liberal hand. The hearts of old gave hands,/ But our new heraldry is hands, not hearts." (III.iv.46-47)

There are also examples of negation of the heart, as in the following examples, all of which are for love:

> I must, forsooth, be forced
> To give my hand, opposed against my heart.
> (Shrew. III.ii.8-9)

> Oh stay! I have no power to let her pass.
> My hand would free her, but my heart says no.
> (1.H. VI V.iii.60-61)

> 'Tis but the boldness of his hand, haply,
> which his heart was not consenting to!
> (All's W. III.ii.79-80)

Although the search for examples within the specific patterns could go on, the process becomes more interesting when the various types of applied imagery are selected from a particular play. Perhaps the most important attitude for the forthcoming examination of whole plays is that a variety of possibilities exists around the application of any one pattern. The discussion of the imagery

in terms of stage gestures will be less evident than they were in this chapter. Since the progression of interest is now moving to a structural concern with imagery, the pre-established basis of gestures must fade even further into the background. But the consideration of hand gestures must not be forgotten; they are still the implied basis for all of the imagery patterns. They will be left out because the presentation and argument are over and the obvious need not be stated.

CHAPTER III

HAND IMAGERY IN ACTION

Exploring the five hand patterns as they appear in plays places the patterns back into perspective. Their effectiveness can be measured within the context of entire plays in which they were originally employed to achieve specific dramatic effects.

Most of the illustrations are tragedies, because the imagery patterns appear most often to enhance horror in tragedies. After considering the total view of the plays, there can be little doubt that many of the imagery passages create a strong impact upon the audience.

Titus Andronicus undoubtedly contains the most memorable horror hand scenes. Few people could walk away and easily forget the sight of Lavinia struggling on stage with her bleeding stumps and mouth. Unlike the buried images in a play such as Antony and Cleopatra, these hand images are painfully obvious.

The first sight of Lavinia with her hands cut off mixes shock, cruelty, and dementia. Demetrius and Chiron are so pleased with their clever amputations, they congratulate each other and taunt Lavinia for her newly altered state. Their confidence in her inability to identify

them leads into an ironic description of the method she uses to expose them: "Write down thy mind, bewray thy meaning so,/ An if thy stumps will let thee play the scribe." (II. iv.3-4) Demetrius and Chiron spend the rest of this short scene dementedly taunting the poor, tortured Lavinia. They advise her to go home and wash her hands, but they remind her she has no tongue to call for water or hands to wash. Perhaps nothing is left for her but suicide—hanging, if she could only make the necessary loop.

Their pleasant chat is broken up when Marcus enters the scene and reacts too verbally to the signs of his niece's condition. His speech obviously expresses his horrified reaction to both the hand amputation and tongue removal:

> What stern ungentle hands
> Have lopped and hewed and made thy body bare
> Of her two branches, those sweet ornaments,
> Whose circling shadows kings have sought to sleep in. . .?
> (II.iv.16-19)

He describes the flowing spouts of blood and bemoans the loss of the fingers that should be sewing, the hands that should be playing the flute. Climaxing the expression of horror, and consequently ending the bloody spectacle the audience has been forced to view, Marcus leads her off to find her father and show the sight that will "make thy father blind" (II.iv.52).

Such a gross display of blood and maiming predominates in Shakespeare's first tragedy and in his other early

productions. This preceding scene, amateurishly over-written and overemphasized as it is, provides a clear clue to the horror hand symbolism which Shakespeare continued to use and refine in his tragedies. The precedents for most of these scenes exist in possible sources, but verse developments and the final accumulations of the scenes seem to belong to Shakespeare. Controversy about the sources make it difficult to determine just how far Shakespeare developed the ideas he borrowed. Whether he was totally or partially indebted to others for the incidents, he chose to use a large amount of hand imagery.

Some uses of hands in Titus Andronicus, although less spectacular than Lavinia's mutilation, are melodramatically effective. For instance, just before Lavinia is maimed, a grimly horrible scene involving her murdered husband makes use of his dead hand. Quintus and Martius have literally stumbled upon Bassianus' grave which Martius identifies as follows:

> Upon his bloody finger he doth wear
> A precious ring, that lightens all the hole,
> Which, like a taper in some monument,
> Doth shine upon the dead man's earthy cheeks
> And shows the ragged entrails of the pit. (II.iii.226-230)

The strong sense of plucking is used in this scene, also. Quintus tries to pull Martius out of the grave, struggling to free his brother from his grisly companion and thus save both of them from being falsely accused of murder:

> Reach me thy hand, that I may help thee out,
> Or, wanting strength to do thee so much good,
> I may be plucked into the swallowing womb (II.iii.237-239)

He fails in the attempt to help his brother and thus Quintus, who attempted to give his brother a helping hand, has been pulled to his own doom instead. Quintus' helping hand leads to a death grasp from the grave, and, indirectly, the loss of a father's helping hand. Again, the scene is melodramatic and clearly intended to chill the audience.

An even more melodramatic scene comes when Lavinia realizes that she can write to identify the villainous brothers who dragged her to her ruin. The mood is set when young Lucius is frightened by his Aunt Lavinia and tries to run away from her seemingly mad pursuit. Marcus stops the boy so that Lavinia has the opportunity to rummage through his fallen books and awkwardly manipulate with her stumps until she finds the passage from Ovid's Metamorphoses which relates the classical precedent for her misfortune.

Any awkward, pained movements by a maimed individual automatically hit the normal viewer with a sense of disgust both at the maimed person and at himself for watching the struggle—but his attention is usually helplessly frozen. And the focus is on Lavinia's deformity as she struggles to spell out the crime and the criminals by using her stumps to guide a staff in her mouth.

Shortly before, Titus had sacrificed one of his hands in the hopes of saving his condemned sons. Aaron delivers the message which sets up the useless gesture. If Titus wants his sons released, he must chop off his hand. Titus

naively expresses gratitude for the opportunity. "With all my heart I'll send the Emperor/ My hand" (III.i.160-161).

Lucius and Marcus immediately contend for the opportunity to submit one of their hands instead. Both praise the noble service of the old soldier's hand. Lucius exclaims:

> For that noble hand of thine,
> That hath thrown down so many enemies,
> Shall not be sent. My hand will serve the turn.
> My youth can better spare my blood than you,
> And therefore mine shall save my brothers' lives.
> (III.i.163-167)

But Marcus feels that he has better reason to substitute his hand. He praises Titus' admirable use of his hands in battle while his own "hath been but idle; let it serve/ To ransom my two nephews from their death" (III.i.172-173)

While this struggle between Marcus and Lucius builds before the conceivably nervous audience, Titus makes up his mind to send his own hand without further ado. So, he politely requests Aaron to chop off his hand for him. Aaron only too happily obliges Titus and thus provides another gory event. Although many fathers in the audience might claim loyalty enough to give their right arm for a child, they must recoil in disgust from the naive father who cuts off his hand and then loses his sons anyway.

The shocking contrast and gruesome end to Titus' sacrifice comes with a messenger—the returned hand and the heads of Martius and Quintus. Titus is understandably thrown into wild, uncontrollable grief, and organizes a rather macabre march to lead off his revenge. The hand is

prominently displayed as Lavinia carries it in her dumb mouth.

If any doubt remains about Shakespeare's interest in including so many hand passages, one can look at one of Titus' speeches for a clear emphasis of the theme:

> What violent hands can she lay on her life?
> Ah, wherefore dost thou urge the name of hands—
> To bid Aeneas tell the tale twice o'er,
> How Troy was burnt and he made miserable?
> Oh, handle not the theme, to talk of hands,
> Lest we remember still that we have none.
> Fie, fie, how frantically I square my talk
> As if we should forget we had no hands
> If Marcus did not name the word of hands!
> (III.ii.25-33)

By the time Shakespeare wrote Julius Caesar, he had refined the use of hand symbolism; but he had apparently not lost his taste for its use to gain an effect of gore. Julius Caesar's death by stabbing was the clearest vehicle for the hand image in the tragedy. A clear progression of the description and symbolism of the murder reveals the planned structure which made it a recurrent theme.

The actual stabbing scene, Act III, Scene 1, includes obvious use of hand gestures. Casca receives the order to be "the first that rears your hand" (30). Brutus sets up the action by kissing Caesar's hand while requesting an appeal. Acting on the responsibility to signal the others, Casca cries, "Speak hands, for me!" (76). Afterwards, all the murderers wash their hands in Caesar's blood at Brutus' command:

> Stoop, Romans, stoop,
> And let us bathe our hands in Caesar's blood
> Up to the elbows, and besmear our swords. (105-107)

When Brutus pleads with Antony to try to understand their actions, he speaks of the murderers' hands as if they were disembodied objects which killed but were not cruel:

> Though now we must appear bloody and cruel,
> As by our hands and this our present act
> You see we do. Yet see you but our hands
> And this the bleeding business they have done.
> Our hearts you see not. (165-169)

Antony appears to understand and asks to shake each "bloody hand" (184). But when he is left alone with Caesar's body, he vows revenge on the hands "that shed this costly blood" (258).

A brief comparison with the sources for the description of the murder will show how Shakespeare adapted the accounts of Plutarch to his staging purposes. No mention of hands in connection with the stabbing is included in the chapter on Caesar. However, the dramatic picture of Caesar dying at the foot of Pompey's statue is taken from there.[1]

Plutarch's description in "Marcus Brutus" seemed to fit Shakespeare's dramatic vision of the best way to stage the murder. At least the description employs the word "hand" in a way that might have been incorporated into the dialogue, although none of the dramatic phrases are present in the original version. Most important in considering how Shakespeare altered the death scene for dramatization is the absence of the hand-bathing scene. The only incident

[1] The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans, trans. John Dryden (New York, n.d.), pp. 892-893.

from the source which could have led into this highly effective action, is the reference to the appearance of Brutus and his party on the streets to display their bloody hands and swords. Thus, most of the hand imagery which lends itself to gestures in this murder scene must have come from the imagination of Shakespeare.[2]

A fitting image to suit the bloody sequence of this play is provided by Cassius, who regards the appearance of birds of prey on the battlefield as a sign of a forthcoming defeat in battle. In one sense a predictive, in any sense a macabre vision, "Two mighty eagles fell, and there they perched,/ Gorging and feeding from our soldier's hands" (V.iii.81-82).

Nearly all the hand images in Julius Caesar are still concerned with blood and death. But by the time Shakespeare wrote King Lear, he had achieved a delicate interweaving of multiple themes.

As one might expect from a play which stresses body symbolism, Lear has a great deal of hand imagery. The hand often becomes an object of torture and cruelty—a natural weapon, as when, at the time of his breakdown, Lear suffers from the fear that Nature's and his daughters' hands are tearing at him. Most of these scenes of unnatural cruelty are attributed to Shakespeare's imagination, which means that the hand passages could not have been adapted or adopted from sources.

[2]Plutarch, pp. 1196-97.

Lear's breakdown scene best illustrates the concept of disembodiment and even approaches an existential break from the normal concept of the universe. While he is building into the fever of his madness during the storm, Lear lists the sins which will be discovered through the wrath of the storm. In a sense of complete disembodiment, he cries, "Hide thee, thou bloody hand" (III.ii.53). Shortly thereafter, he compares filial ingratitude to the mouth tearing the hand which feeds it, feeling that he is the hand and his daughters are tearing him to pieces.

As the decay proceeds, Lear begins to reject his hands as he had earlier rejected his clothes. When Gloucester wants to kiss his hand, he says, "Let me wipe it first, it smells of mortality" (IV.vi.136). Authority which punishes unjustly becomes a bloody hand. Thus, in the midst of one of Lear's visions he calls out: "Thou rascal beadle, hold thy bloody hand!/ Why dost thou lash that whore?" (IV.vi.164-165) And when he finally sees Cordelia, he doubts that anything is really happening as he sees it, or that he can rely on himself as a link to reality:

> Where have I been? Where am I? Fair daylight?
> I am mightily abused. I should e'en die for pity
> To see another thus. I know not what to say.
> I will not swear these are my hands. (IV.vii.52-55)

Goneril and Regan both become symbols of tearing, plucking hand weapons who bring out mutual reactions in the other characters. When Goneril undergoes her fearful

metamorphosis into a hunter and killer, she declares, "I must change arms at home and give the distaff/ Into my husband's hands" (IV.ii.17-18). In her opinion, her husband's hands are not fit to be weapons; so she, the warrior at heart, must arm herself for war. Albany has enough hate to want to stop her, however. Again, malice in the heart seems to transfer to the hands. He says, in terms strong enough to override Goneril's opinion of him:

> Were't my fitness
> To let these hands obey my blood,
> They are apt enough to dislocate and tear
> Thy flesh and bones. (IV.ii.63-66)

Regan and Goneril are at the height of their tearing and plucking desires in the scene in which Gloucester's eyes are put out. In Lear, more than any other of the tragedies, the play on plucking clearly illustrates the violence of that word as Shakespeare uses it. The whole blinding scene is heavily sprinkled with hand and plucking actions and descriptions.

When Gloucester is first brought in, Regan cries, "Hang him instantly," but Goneril commands, "Pluck out his eyes" (III.vii.4-5). While questioning Gloucester, Regan plucks his beard and Gloucester chastises her actions toward a host: "With robbers' hands my hospitable favors/ You should not ruffle thus." (III.vii.40-41) Regan puts the concept of hands back to the dominant position when she asks, "To whose hands have you sent the lunatic King?" (III.vii.46). Gloucester, when explaining why he helped

the king, well describes the two monster women as follows:

> Because I would not see thy cruel nails
> Pluck out his poor old eyes, nor thy fierce sister
> In his anointed flesh stick boarish fans.
> (III.vii.56-58)

Since she cannot get her hands on her father, Regan gains satisfaction from watching her husband put out Gloucester's eyes: "Upon these eyes of thine I'll set my foot." (III.vii.68) The servant who mortally wounds Cornwall cries, "Hold your hand, my lord" (III.vii.72). But Cornwall accomplishes the bloody act of plucking out Gloucester's eyes, to the great satisfaction of his spectator-wife.

A different tone and pattern is set for Edgar. Early in the play, his honor is brought into question because of a letter. His father, overwhelmed at the unnatural action of his son, asks, "Had he a hand to write this? A heart and brain to breed it in?" (I.ii.60-61). Edmund, faking sympathy, tells Gloucester that he hopes the hand does not tell the story of Edgar's heart.

Edgar is next called upon to put hand to sword and is thus tricked into confirming the false suspicions against him. As Poor Tom, when his body becomes a major symbol, Edgar does not speak of or regard hands as anything of special importance, until he leads his father to Dover. Thus, with Edgar, unlike Lear, hands progress from vehicles of violence and deceit to helping, guiding instruments.

Macbeth contains one of the most thorough structure

examples of hand symbolism in Shakespeare's plays. It is the best illustration, because famous lines have made people conscious of the importance of hand images to the characters.

As is true of most of Shakespeare's tragedies, Macbeth deals with the decay of strong individuals. The characters in this play are undone by deeds devised in ambition-twisted hearts and executed with all too willing hands. The deterioration of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth is caused by consciences that should have functioned before the murders were committed. Explained in terms of the major patterns, the guilt generated by their awareness of the horror of their murders is expressed through the disembodied hand pattern. The two main characters speak of their hands in an existential sense, regarding them as bearers of murder and guilt which they as individuals do not want to claim.

A minor, but effective, early hand image is drawn with the three witches. Just before Macbeth encounters them, they dance together crying, "the wierd sisters, hand in hand" (I.iii.32). Banquo heightens the hand image by describing their first motion of recognition, "By each at once her choppy finger laying/ Upon her skinny lips" (I.iii.44-45). In a later scene, the witches sense evil approaching and declare: "By the pricking of my thumbs/ Something wicked this way comes." (IV.i.44-45)

Macbeth is afflicted with waking visions which haunt him even before he begins the series of murders. Discounting

the witches as a vision, his first occurs before he murders Duncan:

> Is this a dagger which I see before me,
> The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee.
> (II.i.33-34)

Again, the hand becomes a disembodied instrument which will effect the act from which Macbeth's soul recoils. But he cannot grasp the elusive dagger; he must draw his own weapon.

His sense of responsibility grows with each murder. When he plans Banquo's death, he uses instruments—paid murderers. But when he decides to murder Macduff's family, he puts aside all pretense of visions and hired murderers. At last, Macbeth admits that his will is responsible for the final act of murder and that his hands are the instruments: "The very firstlings of my heart shall be/ The firstlings of my hand." (IV.i.147-148)

Both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth have recurring horrified reactions to the blood which covered their hands at the time of Duncan's murder. At first, Lady Macbeth, who has never killed before, assures her soldier-husband that once the blood is gone, their reaction will ease, too:

> Retire we to our chamber.
> A little water clears us of this deed,
> How easy is it then! (II.ii.66-68)

But Macbeth is haunted from the start. Before he commits the murder, Macbeth is described waiting in the darkness with his "hangman's hands" (II.ii.28), ready to tear at the vitals of the two restless victims. When he

confides to his wife that he can sleep no more, she brusquely replies, "Go get some water/ And wash this filthy witness from your hand" (II.ii.46-47). But despite his wife's scoffing, the soldier Macbeth is not certain that the blood of his victims will disappear from his hands, nor will his horror at the act of causing the violent deaths fade as long as the memory of that blood on his hands remains:

> Whence is that knocking?
> How is't with me when every noise appals me?
> What hands are here? Ha! They pluck out mine
> eyes!
> Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
> Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will
> rather
> The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
> Making the green one red. (II.ii.57-63)

And Lady Macbeth enters immediately after to counterpoint in mocking tones the key to her husband's guilt: "My hands are of your color, but I shame/ To wear a heart so white." (II.ii.63-64)

When the royal bodies are discovered, the guards are found with their hands smeared with blood. Horror follows the assumption that the very hands which were to fight for the lives of their rulers are covered with their charges' blood. Banquo, who places himself "in the great hand of God" (II.iii.136), pledges revenge against the treason from that lofty position.

Later, after Banquo is murdered, the hand image is called to play again. Macbeth calls upon the night to

> Scarf up the tender eye of pitiful day,
> And with thy bloody and invisible hand
> Cancel and tear to pieces that great bond
> Which keeps me pale! (III.ii.46-50)

The hands are regarded as agents of murder by other characters, also. For instance, Angus remarks on Macbeth's inability to find enough royal subjects to defend his kingdom against the army Macduff brings back from England—"Now does he feel/ His secret murders sticking on his hands" (V.ii.16-17).

Lady Macbeth's psychotic compulsion to wash her hands clean of guilt bears witness to her attitude toward the vehicles of murder. There is something universally spine-tingling and devastating in the pathetic decay of Lady Macbeth. Perhaps her speech is quoted so often because people recognize the horror one can feel towards a hand that has carried out a wish which would have been better left undone.

> Out damned spot! Out, I say! One, two
> —why, then 'tis time to do't. Hell is murky.
> . . . . . .
> Here's the smell of sweet blood still. All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. (V.i.39-57)

Within the context of the play, the doctor is quick to note her habit of rubbing her hands as if attempting to wash them. And he repeats the linking of hands and heart theme when he states: "What a sigh is there! The heart is sorely charged." (V.i.59-60)

Lady Macbeth apparently maintains a sense of responsibility for the murder and an air of protection towards her husband. Their hands, grisly from gore, are linked again at her wish as she confuses the knocking which

followed Duncan's death with the realization of Banquo's murder. She attempts to reach her husband and soothe him:

> To bed, to bed, there's knocking at the gate. Come, come, come, come, give me your hand. What's done cannot be undone. (V.i.73-75)

Macbeth appeals to the doctor to save his wife from insanity. The hand is called upon to pluck out the unnatural:

> Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased,
> Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,
> Raze out of the written troubles of the brain.
> (V.iii.40-42)

But the doctor cannot help Lady Macbeth, nor can the seemingly impossible circumstances predicted for Macbeth's death prevent Macduff from killing him. Both monarchs are caught in the web of guilt which they wove from their own ambitions.

There is no sign of the guilt patterns in the source stories from Holinshed's Chronicles. The inner forces which caused the deterioration of the characters and the major passages which lead into hand imagery are Shakespeare's creations. His sense of the dramatic and his vision of acting, are largely responsible for the development of hand imagery in Macbeth.

Richard II is the history of the decay of two monarchs—the emotional decay of Richard II and the spiritual decay of Henry IV—although Richard rallies to escape the lamb-like existence which horrified his wife and Henry's troubles have only begun when the play closes. Guilt and

decay dominate the play, but the hand symbolism does not carry the strength that it does in Lear or Macbeth.

There are two scenes which feature gage throwing—an act which is not in itself a hand gesture but involves a fierce hand motion and, in a sense, is a representation of the hand that will bear arms against one who questions an individual's honor. In Act I, Scene 1, Bolingbroke and Mowbray challenge each other to defend their mutual accusations of treason. Bolingbroke is the first to act: "Pale trembling coward, there I throw my gage." (69) He, in his time, will sit as king while gages are thrown by accusers of Aumerle, who replies with: "There is my gage, the manual seal of death/ That marks thee out for Hell. I say thou liest." (IV.i.25-26)

Both Bolingbroke and Mowbray eagerly approach the tourney and trial as an opportunity to prove their innocence. Each young man kneels to kiss his sovereign's hand, proclaiming right and honor on his side; but instead of being allowed to fight, they are banished.

Mowbray's life banishment strikes him as a sentence of silence, since his language will no longer help him communicate, and feels he deserves "a dearer merit, not so deep a maim . . . at your Highness' hands" (I.iii.156-158), instead of a life in which his native tongue

> . . . an unstringed viol or a harp,
> Or like a cunning instrument cased up
> Or, being open, put into his hands
> That knows no touch to tune the harmony.
> (I.iii.163-165)

Richard commands both Bolingbroke and Mowbray to "lay on our royal sword your banished hands" (I.iii.179) to take an oath accepting all terms of their banishment. As soon as the banishment is legalized, Gaunt declares to Richard that he will soon die; the king cannot give him life although he can "shorten my days . . . with sullen sorrow,/ and pluck nights from me" (I.iii.227-228). Still, Gaunt tries to cheer his son on his way to exile, delivering some sound psychology on how to make the time seem taken with travel instead of marking out a sentence. Bolingbroke, not taken in, asks, "Oh, who can hold a fire in his hand/ By thinking on the frosty Caucasus?" (I.iii.294-295).

In a sense, both kings are responsible for any wrongs done them, because they both act as proud monarchs instead of allowing themselves to be ruled by human conscience. One of Richard's greatest mistakes is the confiscation of John of Gaunt's property--Bolingbroke's heritage.

Gaunt is already weakened by refusing to revenge his brother's death. He admits to Gloucester's widow that her husband's murder is despicable but resigns punishment to God "since correction lieth in those hands/ Which made the fault that we cannot correct" (I.ii.4-5). Gaunt's refusal to revenge his brother's death weighs heavily on him, because it is important in the quarrel which ends in his son's banishment and because of the accusation of his brother's widow.

> One flourishing branch of his most royal root,
> Is cracked, and all the precious liquor spilt,
> Is hacked down, and his summer leaves all faded,
> By envy's hand and murder's bloody ax. (I.ii.18-21)

As he predicted, Gaunt, his spirit broken, lay dying shortly after Bolingbroke's departure. Gaunt sees that England, that great "fortress built by Nature for herself/ Against infection and the hand of war" (II.i.43-44), is in danger due to Richard's misguided extravagance. He tries to talk some sense into the stubborn king's head. But Richard only awaits Gaunt's death eagerly, because he wants the estate money for his Irish war. York reminds Richard of his grandfather's greatness and states that his father would never have stolen from his relatives as Richard is stealing from Bolingbroke:

> His noble hand
> Did win what he did spend, and spent not that
> Which his triumphant father's hand had won.
> His hands were guilty of no kindred blood,
> But bloody with the enemies of his kin. (II.i.179-183)

Since that still does not move Richard, York warns him that his act will "pluck a thousand dangers on your head" (II.i.205). But Richard will not be stopped. "Think what you will, we seize into our hands/ His plate, his goods, his money, and his lands." (II.i.209-210)

As York predicted, Richard does pluck dangers on his head. After Richard has gone off to fight his foolish Irish war, Bolingbroke comes into England to claim his heritage. Poor York is left to straighten out the affairs "thus thrust disorderly into my hands" (II.ii.110). The

country rallies to Bolingbroke's cause, an event which moves him to commit his thanks and rewards to his friends: "My heart this covenant makes, my hand thus seals it." (II.iii.50) Richard, on the other hand, stands isolated, "A wandering vagabond, my rights and royalties/ Plucked from my arms" (II.iii.120-121).

Bolingbroke vows to accomplish at least one deed with his new force—to get "Bushy, Bagot, and their complices, . . . Which I have sworn to weed and pluck away" (II.iii.165-167). And when he does face them, he voices the same concern for justifying their deaths that he will later utter over Richard's body: "Yet, to wash your blood/ From off my hands, . . ." (III.i.5-6) After a brief accusation, Bolingbroke turns them over "to execution and the hand of death" (III.i.30).

Meanwhile, Richard returns to England and praises the land which he believes belongs to him: "So, weeping, smiling, greet I thee, my earth,/ And do thee royal favors with my royal hands." (III.ii.10-11) He asks the Bishop of Carlisle if he realizes that when Heaven's eye shines down

> Then murders, treasons, and detested sins,
> The cloak of night being plucked from off their backs,
> Stand bare and naked, trembling at themselves?
> (III.ii.44-46)

But only bad news comes from messengers. Thinking that his closest advisers have deserted him, Richard curses the men who were actually beheaded before Scroop tells him to withdraw the curse since "their peace is made/ With heads

and not with hands" (III.ii.137-138). In spite of the overwhelming odds, Richard still believes he is the rightful king:

> If we be not, show us the hand of God
> That hath dismissed us from our stewardship;
> For well we know no hand of blood and bone
> Can gripe the sacred handle of our scepter.
> (III.iii.77-80)

He predicts pestilence on the heads of children of those "that lift your vassal hands against my head" (III.iii.89). Bolingbroke, who still has made no move to usurp power, pays respects by humbly kissing Richard's hand, vowing he wants nothing more than his rightful inheritance.

But Richard is well aware of his position and relinquishes his kingship. When the new rule begins, the old order has to be purged. While Aumerle is flinging gages, he takes a strong oath to uphold his honor while accepting a challenge, "An if I do not, may my hands rot off/ And never brandish more revengeful steel" (IV.i.49-50).

Richard, standing alone, sends word to Bolingbroke that he "his high scepter yields/ To the possession of thy royal hand" (IV.i.109-110). But he is required to make a public appearance and in an agony of humiliation cries:

> Here, Cousin, seize the crown,
> Here, Cousin—
> On this side my hand, and on that side yours.
> (IV.i.181-183)

Although he is not reconciled to the action, he states:

> I give this heavy weight from off my head
> And this unwieldy scepter from my hand,
> The pride of kingly sway from out my heart.
> With mine own hands I give away my crown.
> (IV.i.204-208)

Richard charges all who watch with the sin of complicity and reminds them that guilt cannot be washed away "Though some of you with Pilate wash your hands" (IV.i.239).

Act V deals with the steady destruction of Richard, who remains humbly patient until the last moment of his life. His wife tries to stay with him, but he assures her they must divide totally "hand from hand, my love, and heart from heart" (i.82). He bears the humiliation from the crowds who, in London, with "rude, misgoverned hands from windows' tops/ Threw dust and rubbish on King Richard's head" (ii.4-5).

York despises the humiliation which Richard is forced to bear but resigns himself to Bolingbroke's reign since "Heaven hath a hand in these event,/ To whose high will we bound our calm contents" (ii.37-38). York must face disgrace himself when he finds that his son is linked with traitors who plan to kill Bolingbroke. He tries to clear his name by turning in young Aumerle, but his wife will not stand for the action that will "pluck my fair son from mine age" (ii.93). All three rush to the new king to plead their cases. Aumerle tells Bolingbroke to "stay thy revengeful hand" (iii.42) when the King acts on his first inclination to kill a traitor. In spite of his father's accusation, Aumerle swears, "My heart is not confederate with my hand" (iii.53), to which his father retorts, "It was, villain, ere thy hand did set it down" (54).

Bolingbroke pardons Aumerle, but he is still uneasy about Richard and so drops the hint that he would like to see him dead. The former king is still philosophizing about his fallen state, but he shows his first burst of anger upon hearing that his horse, Barbary, bore the new king proudly:

> That jade hath eat bread from my royal hand,
> This hand hath made him proud with clapping him.
> Would he not stumble? (v.85-87)

But that is thin preparation for his reaction to the trick which forces him to fight so that he may be killed. At least, Richard regains stature by fighting against his inevitable death. When he sees the murderers arriving with weapons, he snatches an ax from one, crying: "Villain, thy own hand yields thy death's instrument." (v.107) He manages to kill two servants before he is struck down by Exton and does not die without leaving a curse:

> That hand shall burn in never-quenching fire
> That staggers thus my person. Exton, thy fierce hand
> Hath with the King's blood stained the King's own land.
> (v.109-111)

Bolingbroke doubles the curse which hapless Exton suffers. Appalled at the deed he had wished done, he says:

> Exton, I thank thee not, for thou hast wrought
> A deed of slander with thy fatal hand
> Upon my head and all this famous land. (vi.34-36)

Weighed down by his own guilt, the King ends the play with the vow to attempt to mourn Richard's death and "make a voyage to the Holy Land/ To wash this blood off from my guilty hand" (vi.49-50).

As is true of Macbeth and King Lear, most of the hand passages in Richard II are in scenes which were devised by Shakespeare. The deposition of Richard was dramatized from a document; the actions of Bolingbroke and Mowbray's quarrel were imagined from a simple account of events. In nearly all the passages quoted, Shakespeare took events, real or imaginary, and provided the dialogue for history. The dramatization was built as much for actors' needs as for audience entertainment.

King John, a play exposing the cruelty of power and the resulting destruction of innocence, appropriately employs the use of hands as instruments of terror and as implements to carry out destructive impulses of ambitious hearts. Most of the hand imagery is clumped in speeches plotting destruction or is interwoven into passages of guilt.

Although the play itself is uneven, there is a fairly uniform use of stage directions; where there is strong emotion, there is often an inclusion of strong action. Hand imagery occupies an unusual proportion of speech and gesture in King John. The word "hand" is applied 52 times, second in number only to Titus Andronicus.[3]

As Chatillon delivers the French command to King John to relinquish his throne, he speaks in a physical sense of exchange:

> Desiring thee to lay aside the sword
> Which sways usurpingly these several titles
> And put the same into young Arthur's hand. (I.1.12-14)

[3]E. A. J. Honigmann, ed. King John, by William Shakespeare, Arden Edition (Cambridge, 1962), p. lx.

Not long after introducing this central problem, Shakespeare introduces a favored central character—Philip the Bastard. In presenting his credentials as Philip Faulconbridge, he uses his typical flamboyant style of speech which often leads naturally into pantomime:

> A soldier, by the honor-giving hand
> Of Coeur-de-lion knighted in the field. (I.i.53-54)

After accepting his bastardy, Philip extends a strange type of comfort to his mother for having succumbed to Richard's seduction:

> The awless lion could not wage the fight,
> Nor keep his princely heart from Richard's hand.
> He that perforce robs lions of their hearts
> May easily win a woman's. (I.i.266-269)

In contrast to the bravado of the Bastard, Arthur is introduced as a defenseless but gracious and charming boy. The welcome he extends to Lewis seems to separate heart and hand: "I give you welcome with a powerless hand,/ But with a heart full of unstained love." (II.i.15-16)

Constance sees the help offered by France and Austria as the means to render Arthur's powerless hand powerful, and she thanks them with a mother's love: "Till your strong hand shall help to give him strength/ To make a more requital to your love!" (II.i.33-34)

When Constance contributes to the initial battle between the forces of John and Arthur, which disintegrates into verbal quibbling, she is forced to defend Arthur's legitimacy. In a description which directs her pantomime,

Constance concludes with an image of Arthur as a "brief" of Geffrey that "the hand of time/ Shall draw . . . into as huge a volume" (II.i.102-103).

Returning to the initial image of a phsyical exchange of power, John demands:

> Arthur of Bretagne, yield thee to my hand,
> And out of my dear love I'll give thee more
> Than e'er the coward hand of France can win.
> (II.i.156-158)

But King Philip vows to win power for Arthur and stands in defiance of King John's demand for surrender. The hand he speaks of suggests both pantomime and imagery:

> Lo, in this right hand, whose protection
> Is most divinely vowed upon the right
> Of him it holds, stands young Plantagenet
> (II.i.236-238)

The actual battle takes place in the limitless space and time dimension of off-stage imagination and is reported by the usual means—a messenger. An expository scene of this nature requires pantomime. In this case, hand gestures are employed twice:

> Our colors do return in those same hands
> That did display them when we first marched forth;
> . . . . . .
> Our lusty English, all with purpled hands,
> Dyed in the dying slaughter of their foes.
> (II.i.319-323)

But King Philip does not accept defeat as readily as the English herald declares it and employs an oath to show his resolution:

> And by this hand I swear,
> . . . . . .
> Before we will lay down our just-borne arms,
> We'll put thee down, . . . (II.i.342-346)

Instead of immediately returning to the battlefield, the two sides decide to reconcile through the marriage of France and England—Lewis and Blanche. King John proudly extolls Blanche's superiority and desirability in addition to her rank: "As she in beauty, education, blood,/ Holds hand with any princess of the world." (II.i.493-494) Permission for the marriage is asked for and granted in the common imagery of joining hands:

> JOHN Philip of France, if thou be pleased withal,
> Command thy son and daughter to join hands.
> K. PHI. It likes us well. Young Princes, close
> your hands. (II.i.531-533)

Everyone feels the marriage is a brilliant solution except for Constance and the Bastard. Of the two, the Bastard is given the more articulate speech. He pauses to question his own right to question ruling self-interest—the "Commodity":

> And why rail I on this Commodity?
> But for because he hath not wooed me yet.
> Not that I have the power to clutch my hand
> When his fair angels would salute my palm,
> But for my hand, as unattempted yet,
> Like a poor beggar raileth on the rich. (II.i.587-592)

Act III is heavy with hand imagery, beginning with the pantomime which was discussed earlier: "What means that hand upon that breast of thine?" (i.21) Constance, foreseeing the end of hope for herself and her son, rails at Fortune:

> She adulterates hourly with thine uncle John,
> And with her golden hand hath plucked on France
> To tread down fair respect of sovereignty.
> (i.56-58)

When the Church imposes its demands upon the two monarchs, hand references express much of the controversy. In a literal sense, John, as representative of England, denies responsibility to an Italian priest and "Where we do reign, we will alone uphold/ Without the assistance of a mortal hand" (i.157-158). Whereupon Rome's representative, Pandulph, excommunicates John and extends a blessing to any hand which will act as an instrument to kill John:

> And meritorious shall that hand be called,
> Canonized and worshipped as a saint,
> That takes away by any secret course
> Thy hateful life. (i.176-179)

The actual break must be symbolized by King Philip's act of dropping King John's hand. Pandulph commands him to do so, but Philip delays, thus adding to the drama:

> PAN. Philip of France, on peril of a curse,
> Let go the hand of that archheretic,
> . . . . . .
> EL. Look'st thou pale, France? Do not let go thy hand.
> CON. Look to that, Devil, lest that France repent,
> And by disjoining hands, Hell lose a soul.
> (i.191-197)

King Philip expresses his perplexity in terms of hand-linking earlier used for the marriage of Lewis and Blanche:

> This royal hand and mine are newly knit,
> . . . . . .
> No longer than we well could wash our hands
> To clap this royal bargain up of peace
> . . . . . .
> And shall these hands, so lately purged of blood,
> So newly joined in love, so strong in both,
> Unyoke this seizure and this kind regreet?
> . . . . . .
> Make such unconstant children of ourselves
> As now again to snatch our palm from palm,
> Unswear faith sworn, . . . (i.226-245)

Pandulph's reply continues the use of hand imagery:

> France, thou mayst hold a serpent by the tongue,
> A chafèd lion by the mortal paw,
> A fasting tiger safer by the tooth,
> Than keep in peace that hand which thou dost hold.
> (i. 258-261)

Philip tries to separate the physical hand and the hand of faith when he answers: "I may disjoin my hand, but not my faith." (i.262)

Finally, the hands are dropped and war begins again, this time with religion an additional stake. Blanche is now tortured by divided loyalties. Confused to the point of disembodiment, she pictures herself as torn between the two forces:

> I am with both. Each army hath a hand
> And in their rage, I having hold of both,
> They whirl asunder and dismember me. (i.328-330)

Although the above passage leaves the action to the imagination of the actor, Shakespeare sometimes uses specific directions. An example of a farewell motion replaces the hand gesture listed by Bulwer as a farewell sign. The Bastard, leaving for England with Arthur's escorting party, specifically speaks and acts: "So, I kiss your hand." (iii.16) Another specific action is given in the form of a pledge and a farewell by King John to Hubert. His command, "Give me thy hand" (iii.25) provides the action for both actors.

Constance, deranged with grief at the loss of Arthur, reverts to unnatural actions which stand as a contrast to the above. She calls on Death to come to her, claiming

that she will eagerly come to him. Among other actions, she promises to "ring these fingers with thy household worms" (iv.31). When King Philip advises her to bind her hair and gain control of herself, she repeats the oath she made when she tore her hair in grief: "Oh, that these hands could so redeem my son/ As they have given these hairs their liberty!" (iv.71-72)

Pandulph predicts Arthur's death as a necessity under the circumstances of John's reign, for "a scepter snatched with an unruly hand/ Must be as boisterously maintained as gained" (iv.135-136). But after Arthur falls into John's hands

> Even at that news that he dies; and then the hearts
> Of all his people shall revolt from him
> . . . . . .
> And pick strong matter of revolt and wrath
> Out of the bloody fingers' ends of John.
> (iv.164-168)

In the scene between Hubert and Arthur, Act IV, Scene 1, Shakespeare deleted the hand-heart theme which was used in the source—The Troublesome Reign of King John. However, if it is true, as Honigmann argues, that the Troublesome Reign was actually written after Shakespeare's King John, then the hand-heart passages would have been added to Shakespeare's scene.[4] If this is a case in which Shakespeare omitted a major hand-imagery sequence, it is the only one found in the course of research.

In the following scene, Shakespeare worked with hands to carry through the violent actions which result in Arthur's

[4] Ibid., p. xi.

death and John's downfall. John's fear is reflected in the act of his second coronation. Pembroke remarks that the recrowning was unnecessary since "you were crowned before,/ And that high royalty was ne'er plucked off" (IV.ii.4-5). Pembroke is actually with a group which seeks not to congratulate the King but to warn him against the elimination of Arthur. John replies easily with an imagery which avoids the term "murder": "We cannot hold mortality's strong hand." (IV.ii.82) But the rumor of Arthur's death unsettles the populace, and Hubert reports to the King what the people are saying. Shakespeare provides pantomime to dramatize the report:

> And he that speaks doth gripe the hearer's wrist,
> Whilst he that hears makes fearful action
> . . . . . .
> I saw a smith stand with his hammer, thus,
> . . . . . .
> With open mouth swallowing a tailor's news;
> Who, with his shears and measure in his hand, . . .
> (IV.ii.190-196)

Fearful at the consequences of his wish to have Arthur killed, John turns on Hubert and accuses him of being the instrument by which the murder was committed, at the same time removing his own wish as a cause: "Thy hand hath murdered him. I had a mighty cause/ To wish him dead, but thou hadst none to kill him." (IV.ii.205-206) But Hubert will not allow John to deny his order: "Here is your hand and seal for what I did." (IV.ii.215) John still tries to shift the blame to Hubert, but he recognizes the guilt which the order caused.

> Oh, when the last account 'twixt Heaven and earth
> Is to be made, then shall this hand and seal
> Witness against us to damnation!
> . . . . . .
> Hadst not thou been by,
> A fellow by the hand of nature marked,
> Quoted, and signed to do a deed of shame,
> This murder had not come into my mind. (IV.ii.216-223)

For in John's mind, the only one to allow his hand to carry out the heart's wish was Hubert: "Yea, without stop, didst let thy heart consent,/ And consequently thy rude hand to act." (IV.ii.239-240)

Hubert, unable to protect his secret against the accusations of the King, admits that Arthur is alive and thus protects the innocence of his accused hand-instrument:

> This hand of mine
> Is yet a maiden and an innocent hand,
> Not painted with the crimson spots of blood.
> (IV.ii.251-253)

But Arthur had, unfortunately, accomplished what John and Hubert tried to prevent; his rash, fearful jump from the wall killed him. When his body is found, the Bastard exclaims:

> It is a damned and a bloody work,
> The graceless action of a heavy hand,
> If that it be the work of any hand. (IV.iii.57-59)

Salisbury does not allow the question of accident rather than murder to exist:

> If that be the work of any hand!
> We had a kind of light what would ensue.
> It is the shameful work of Hubert's hand. (IV.iii.60-62)

So sure is Salisbury of Hubert's guilt, he vows to refrain from all earthly pleasures, "Till I have set a glory to this hand/ By giving it the worship of revenge" (IV.iii.71-72).

Meanwhile, the French are invading England to punish John for his break from the church. Once again, John goes through the process of being crowned—this time in an attempt to regain the support of the church. The hand of the church repeats the imagery in Act III, Scene 1. John puts himself in its power: "Thus have I yielded up into your hand/ The circle of my glory." (V.i.1-2) Pandulph, as representative of the faith, grants him the powers of earthly reign:

> Take again
> From this my hand, as holding of the Pope
> Your sovereign greatness and authority. (V.i.2-4)

If this action was taken from John Foxe's Actes and Monuments, as Honigmann suggests, the above actions and phrasing were almost directly lifted.[5]

John's problems are not solved by rejoining the church; they are compounded by the Bastard's report that Arthur is dead: "An empty casket where the jewel of life/ By some damned hand was robbed and ta'en away." (V.i.40-41)

Salisbury, true to his vow, reports to aid France, seeing that "We cannot deal but with the very hand/ Of stern injustice and confused wrong" (V.ii.22-23). Lewis welcomes his aid and tries to assuage his conscience with the promise of reward:

> Come, come; for thou shalt thrust thy hand as deep
> Into the purse of rich prosperity
> As Lewis himself. (V.ii.60-62)

[5] Ibid., p. xiv.

Then, spotting Pandulph, Lewis falsely predicts that he comes "To give us warrant from the hand of Heaven/ And on our actions set the name of right" (V.ii.66-67).

Instead, Pandulph has come to plead for peace. He urges Lewis to give up the idea of war:

> And tame the savage spirit of wild War,
> That, like a lion fostered up at hand,
> It may lie gently at the foot of Peace. (V.ii.74-76)

Pandulph's attempts are unsuccessful and the Bastard, upon hearing the report, turns on Lewis' forces with promises of a battle and a reminder of England's strength:

> That hand which had the strength, even at the door,
> To cudgel you and make you take the hatch,
> . . . . . .
> Shall that victorious hand be feebled here
> That in your chambers gave you chastisement?
> (V.ii.137-147)

Fate prevailed. As Pandulph had predicted, Arthur died and John fell to treachery, although Pandulph had not indicated that a monk would poison John. Dying in agony, John desperately rails at those gathered around for not giving him relief from the fires of the poison: "And none of you will bid the winter come/ To thrust his icy fingers in my maw." (V.vii.36-37)

Except for a few speeches lauding England, the play is over when the King dies. As in Macbeth, the play's hand imagery rests largely on the concentration resulting from guilt and vicious deeds and is placed in the scenes which deal with forceful action. It is extremely difficult to say how closely the sources were followed in view of

Honigmann's argument, but it is safe to say that most of the hand passages listed are original with Shakespeare.

Although progression is not a primary concern in this thesis, one of Shakespeare's last comedies tempts one to consider what the playwright had accomplished in the art of providing stage directions. Hand imagery is not important in The Winter's Tale, but hand directives are. Instead of attempting to establish whether a pattern of usage exists in the creation of the plays, a brief comparison with Titus Andronicus will show the contrast between an early and a late play.

In Titus Andronicus, hands are the major means of dramatizing gore and horror, whereas hands in The Winter's Tale are used to establish character, create suspense, and direct specific movements. The latter play is fairly straightforward, employing imagery for love scenes but for little else. None of the gore is here, although some of the awe displayed at Lavinia's tragedy might be compared to Leontes' encounter with the statue. Death is caused by grief or uncontrolled Nature; only the description of Archidamus' unfortunate encounter with the bear pictures gore.

However, the absence of imagery and impact does not make the hand directives less important. Dramatically, they provide an important source of information for both director and actor to determine some of Shakespeare's staging visualization. Action and description dictate the

application of dramatic allusions, such as the description of the close contact Polixenes and Leontes had maintained throughout the years of their separation: "They have seemed to be together, though absent; shook hands, as over a vast; and embraced as it were, from the ends of opposed winds." (I.i.32-35) As another example, Polixenes' concern at his son's love trysts employs the plucking image: "I fear the angle that plucks our son thither." (IV.ii.52)

An excellent clue to the portrayal of Autolycus can be gained through Shakespeare's repeated hand allusions. This rogue, who lives by nimble wit and thievery, should use hand gestures to aid audience awareness of his manner of living. In the conny-catching scene, Act IV, Scene 3, he begs the clown to pluck off his garments as he lies groveling on the ground, asks for a helping hand and then picks the clown's pockets (the exact stage direction was added later). Other than broad action directions and character clues, there is no real indication of a character whose deft hand movements should hold the audience's attention. But the actor will find in the next scene a picture of Autolycus as a fast-talking merchant selling ribbons and gloves. Most of the description is in the clown's dialogue, but the mood is set for Autolycus' actions by the time he enters. The clown and Autolycus are tied to the preceding pocket-picking by the demands of Mopsa for her promised gifts.

MOP. Come, you promised me a tawdry lace
and a pair of sweet gloves.
CLO. Have I not told thee how I was cozened by
the way and lost all my money? (IV.iv.252-255)

Autolycus sells by singing. When he is asked if a ballad is true, he swears, "Five Justices' hands at it" (IV.iv.288). The necessities of his trade are "To have an open ear, a quick eye, and a nimble hand" (IV.iv.683-684). When pretending to be in a position to counsel the shepherd, he advises, "If that shepherd be not in handfast, let him fly" (IV.iv.794-795). Another phrase using "hand" which might have been stated in other ways is the direction for procedure which Autolycus gives the shepherd: "Walk before toward the seaside. Go on the right hand." (IV.iv.854-855) When things do work out well, the clown and the shepherd express gratitude to Autolycus, whom the clown swears he will recommend to the Prince "as honest a true fellow as any is in Bohemia" (V.ii.170) and as a "tall fellow of thy hands" (V.ii.178), repeating the latter phrase three times.

Hands are used to create suspense in the statue scene. Paulina describes the statue as a likeness which "Excels whatever yet you looked upon/ or hand of man hath done" (V.iii.16-17). Perdita, overcome by emotion at first seeing her mother as a statue, begs, "Dear Queen, that ended when I but began,/ Give me that hand of yours to kiss" (V.iii.45-46).

Paulina predicts the miracle of the moving statue, counseling only those who can bear the sight to remain: "I'll make the statue move indeed, descend/ And take you by the hand." (V.iii.88-89) As the Queen descends, Paulina

stops Leontes' implied movement: "Nay, present your hand." (V.iii.107)

Specific movements written into the dialogue include both common actions and movements necessary to the dramatic development of the play. Loyalty is sworn with a hand grip after Camillo has warned Polixenes of Leontes' murderous state of mind, the action being implicit in Polixenes' speech: "I do believe thee/ I saw his heart in's face. Give me thy hand." (I.ii.447-448) Leontes, faced with rebellion for his rejection of Perdita, threatens, "The bastard brains with these my proper hands/ Shall I dash out" (II.iii.140-141).

Marriage vows call for the joining of hands, especially in the scene between Florizel and Perdita. Polixenes tests his son's affection by saying

> . . . when I was young
> And handed love as you do, I was wont
> To load my she with knacks. (IV.iv.357-359)

But Florizel claims the most important gifts are in the heart and instead of speaking of trifles, wants to declare his love for Perdita by taking her hand in front of the old gentleman, his disguised father: "I take thy hand, this hand,/ As soft as dove's down and as white as it." (IV.iv.372-373) Polixenes muses, "How prettily the young swain seems to wash/ The hand was fair before!" (IV.iv.376-377). While Polixenes' ire rises, the old shepherd welcomes the chance for his daughter's marriage and happily calls out, "Take hands, a bargain!" (IV.iv.393).

Pantomime is often provided for the narrative of events which occurred off-stage. Many dramatic scenes in The Winter's Tale must be related to the audience; apparently, Shakespeare tried to avoid staging too many emotional scenes. Thus, the gentleman who describes the meeting of the two kings is provided with an array of joyful actions: "There was casting-up of eyes, holding-up of hands, with a countenance of such distraction that they were to be known by garment, not by favor." (V.ii.50-53)

The actions which contribute to Leontes' jealousy are hauntingly similar to the actions of Desdemona and Cassio which Iago used to torment Othello. The major difference is that Leontes works on his own observations. When Hermione first tells Leontes that she has persuaded Polixenes to stay a while longer, Leontes is overjoyed, declaring that she has not spoken to better purpose since

> Three crabbed months had soured themselves to death
> Ere I could make thee open thy white hand
> And clap thyself my love. Then didst thou utter
> "I am yours forever." (I.ii.102-105)

But the same mouth and hands soon move him to a deep, jealous rage. He describes the pantomime movements which Hermione and Polixenes should perform innocently for the necessary, dramatic contrast:

> 'T may, I grant,
> But be paddling palms and pinching fingers,
> . . . . . .
> . . . —oh, that is entertainment
> My bosom likes not, nor my brows! (V.ii.114-119)

These actions were inserted by Shakespeare to build

dramatically what was only implied in the source, Robert Greene's Pandosto: The Triumph of Time. In the original narrative, the growing jealousy is described as resulting from the closeness of the visiting king and the Queen, but direct actions such as Shakespeare provided for the view of Leontes and the audience were not included. Shakespeare's knowledge of dramatic necessity opened the possibility of using hand play to incite the king's jealousy.

Practical stage directions and suggestions for hand gestures used in The Winter's Tale complete the illustrations of the playwright's skill as a poet and a playwright. Hand imagery and passages do not exist in equal proportions throughout the plays, but they are used in detectable patterns. Knowing the proper gestures and following the directives in the script would have helped any actor racing against time in an attempt to reach a performance level, especially if he looked closely for the directions he knew the playwright was providing for him. Only the most common gestures would be the same today, e.g. taking an oath, sealing a bargain. Still, the hand passages can provide good sources for interpretive gestures. Shakespeare's stage directions are as much alive and stimulating to today's actor as his verse and hand imagery, and passages may be closely watched for gestic interpretation.

CHAPTER IV

IMAGERY-GESTIC VALUES

Elizabethan dramatic messages were communicated through an inherited tradition of rhetoric and acting. Conscientious scholars have tied acting to dumb shows, pantomime, commedia dell' arte, and Roman plays—but such investigation leaves evidence lifeless. Material on the origin of drama is usually devoid of the vibrancy of performance and of gesture that brings imagery alive. Apparently, the Elizabethan period polished past traditions, tying many theatrical traditions together. Shakespeare's actors come to life again when rhetorical rules are added to the study of other theatrical traditions. They acted with well-trained movements gained by studying previous generations, observing their own decorum-minded age, and listening to contemporary directions. But rules must be applied to a particular script. Since stage directions were sparse, only the dialogue could provide justification for gesture. Playwrights were responsible for supplying dialogue that could also move actors on those small stages.

Shakespeare's theatrical background was a practical, useful one. Since Shakespeare was a stage craftsman as well as a skilled playwright, he undoubtedly inserted stage directions within the dialogue. As an actor and a theatre

manager, two of his major concerns would have been getting the play ready for performance on time and making enough money to survive in the theatrical profession. Most of the short time allowed for rehearsing plays would have been spent on technical problems rather than artistic ones.

These concerns passed into Shakespeare's playwriting craft. Since he wrote under time and monetary pressures, he would not have had time to wait for inspiration or to polish the final draft. Speed and efficiency were necessary for preparing actors and scripts. Shakespeare could not have pondered the problems of his actors and searched long hours to find a way to write just the right gesture into his imagery patterns. But he would have applied every theatrical technique possible, and gesture would have been a primary concern.

The five major patterns—predictives, disembodiment, instruments, plucking and expressions of the heart—represent an arbitrary organizational need rather than Shakespeare's conscious writing pattern. As in the case of imagery-gesture relationships, there is no implication of a similar referent in Shakespeare's notebook or mind. If anything affected Shakespeare's choice of imagery, it would have been a passing memory of a good gesture or an accepted expression which would help communicate a certain action he wanted to include in the play. The patterns do indicate Shakespeare's propensity to use certain stock gestures. Any writer has some traits—favorite words, phrase

patterns, characters, autobiographical experiences—which he uses often enough to cause critics to choose them as patterns, even if the author denies that he used such patterns. The patterns applied to hand imagery indicate possible devices, albeit unintentional, which Shakespeare employed to utilize hand imagery.

Shakespeare obviously considered hand imagery important, because his plays yield hundreds of examples. Bartlett's Concordance lists five and one-half pages of hand imagery.[1]

Not all these hand images lend themselves to gesture, but a sizable portion do. In Titus Andronicus, most of the major scenes involve hands—Lavinia's appearance after the rape, Banquo's grave, Titus' ransom, Lavinia's identification of her rapists, and the scene in which Titus vows revenge. The proportion of hand images is high; 62 passages are listed in the Concordance. The total number of hand passages attributed to the plays treated fully are as follows:

Julius Caesar	39
King Lear	26
Macbeth	29
Richard II	45
King John	52
Winter's Tale	30[2]

In a scene which relies on hand images, the proportion of usage is very high. Act III of King John has twenty

[1]John Bartlett, A Complete Concordance of Shakespeare (New York, 1953).

[2]Ibid.

major passages of hand imagery. Ten of these are in Scene 1, which deals with the forces that will pull France and England into war.

Seeing this high proportion of hand imagery raises the question of why others have not treated it as a major image. Caroline Spurgeon mixes hands in a general category of "Body and Bodily Action" but could not have treated all the passages. She registers a fraction for Titus Andronicus and less than fifteen for Macbeth. She did register 51 for King John, but this represented all body references, not simply hands (Chart VI). Yet she felt that a measure of twenty images of disease in Hamlet (Chart VIII) qualified it as a major image.[3] Her count was considerably higher than Bartlett's Concordance which listed only two passages containing the word "disease" for the same play. According to the above hand image count, the sample plays should be credited with major hand imagery.

The possibility that the images usually heightened horror has been a minor point of interest. One reason for this conclusion is illustrated in the choice of plays for complete studies—the images appear most often in tragedies and tragic scenes of the history plays. Even the comedy studied in detail, The Winter's Tale, has more hand imagery in scenes of jealousy, terror or emotional excitement.

[3]Caroline Spurgeon, Shakespeare's Imagery: And What It Tells Us (Cambridge, 1965).

Innocuous comedies have very few hand images, and most that are used signify pledges; All's Well That Ends Well and Love's Labour Lost each have only seven significant images. Passages chosen for major illustrations usually reflected unusual horror, as in the murder of Julius Caesar and the guilt scenes of Macbeth. Only the hand-heart images are notable exceptions.

This search for gestic values in hand imagery has about the same validity as a search for possible sonnet forms or poetic devices; there is an interest value for anyone seeking something other than a mere plot-line in Shakespeare's plays. The resulting discovery of innumerable specific examples leads to a general consciousness of another level of Shakespeare's depth.

It is often said that one reason so many things have been written on Shakespeare is that he wrote so much and so widely that nearly anything may be found. Notwithstanding the emotional trivia which has passed for scholarship on Shakespeare, there is much more truth in saying that so much has been written, because Shakespeare's genius was so deep and so wide that it has taken four centuries of research to begin to reach the level of understanding from which he started.

Shakespeare's hand imagery offers both an interesting study for the poet and a necessary study for the actor. By thinking of the play as a script, the combination gesture-

imagery value comes into focus. These hand passages reflect a sense of universality, a poet-playwright's concept of the aesthetic and practical facets of dramatic communication.

The directed examination, prepared by and for a combined subjective literary viewpoint and an objective theatre viewpoint, opens up a specific area of study—hand imagery as gesture—which can be broadened to a wider perspective for examining Shakespeare's plays. Within his contemporary context, Shakespeare's imagery must be regarded as a reflection of rhetorical gestures. But his imagery-gestic values span the centuries as easily as his universal themes. Actors today need only to apply new methods to achieve the same audience impact by means of Shakespeare's directions. Meaning can be communicated by modern "natural" gesture as well, if not better, than by restricted rhetorical gesture. The value in the imagery remains the same; it is a clue to the communication of the author's dramatic message.

Hand imagery illustrates Shakespeare's craft and his genius as a poet-playwright. Since most of the hand passages were not adapted from a source, they stand as examples of both poetic creativity and practical stagecraft—products of Shakespeare's imagination. Shakespeare as a poet-playwright was involved with three main concerns—the production of his plays, the reaction of the audience, and the quality of his writing. Through a knowledge of acting

traditions and of Shakespeare's skill, one can see how much he provided for the actor and the reader. Because of this unusual genius, the plays are valuable in both fields of drama and literature. No one before, or since, provided excellent scripts which also stand as excellent literature.

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